FRA GIROLAMO SAVONAROLA

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FRA GIROLAMO SAVONAROLA

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Fra Girolamo Savonarola

A BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY

BASED ON CONTEMPORARY DOCUMENTS

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PREFACE

THE present work owes its inception to the circumstance that, in the month of February 1898, the writer received for review Dr Ludwig Pastor's brochure *Zur Beurtheilung Savonarolas.* Dr Pastor had, as every one interested in such matters is aware, treated at some length of the career of Savonarola in the third volume of his *Geschichte der Päpste im Zeitalter der Renaissance.* His presentment of the facts as well as his judgment upon them, had, however, been somewhat sharply criticised by various writers, and more particularly by Dr Paolo Luotto in an elaborate apology for Savonarola entitled *Il vero Savonarola e il Savonarola di Lodovico Pastor.* To this volume, together with some less important publications, the tract, *Zur Beurtheilung Savonarolas*, was a rejoinder.

To review the pamphlet, then, was to sit in judgment upon two experts; and such a task it was manifestly unreasonable to undertake without having made some acquaintance with the subject at first hand. This again it was hardly possible to do without discovering how considerable a mass of contemporary documentary evidence — published indeed, but scattered through the volumes of the *Archivio Storico Italiano*, the Appendices to the works of Quétif, Perrens, and Villari, the collections of Gherardi and Cappelli, etc., and thus inaccessible to the ordinary English reader—was available for the use of any one who should care to bring it together, in a compendious

form, within the compass of a single volume. Whatever the judgment to be ultimately passed upon Savonarola may be, it will hardly be questioned that he occupies a position in ecclesiastical history so conspicuous and important as to make it desirable that all, or substantially all, that can be known about him should be placed within the reach of those students of history who have neither the leisure, nor perhaps the opportunity, to ransack a library in quest of the whole truth.

The original purpose, then, with which the writer commenced his study of the Savonarola literature has been long since left behind. With Dr Pastor or Professor Luotto as the principals in a controversial contest we are not concerned. The purpose of this biography is, primarily, to set before the reader the facts of Savonarola's life, and a summary of the documentary evidence bearing thereon; and secondly to express, with, we trust, becoming moderation and reserve, our own judgment on such points as have given rise to a divergence of views upon his actions, his words, his aims and intentions, and on the actions and motives of those who, in greater or less measure, took part in the conflict which issued in the final catastrophe of his condemnation and execution.

The volume is in large measure a reprint, after careful revision, of a series of articles which appeared in the *Tablet* from April to December 1898. But more than half the work has been entirely rewritten and considerably expanded. Some account has also been taken, in the earlier chapters, of the very able criticisms passed upon the *Tablet* articles by a writer in the *Irish Rosary* of July, August, and September 1898. It has however seemed desirable to abstain, as far as possible, from anything in the nature of personal controversy. We would wish to take as our motto the wise words of Dr Grauert, the very last—so far as we are aware—which have

been written on the question up to the present date: "Halten wir alle an einer streng sachlichen Diskussion fest; damit wird der Wissenschaft am besten gedient. Die heftigen Kämpfe der Arrabbiati und Piagnonen sollten sich unter uns nicht erneuern!"[1]

The writer's best thanks are due to Dr Ludwig Pastor for the loan of Cappelli's most valuable collection of documents bearing on the career of Savonarola; to the Rev. Joseph Browne, S.J., Rector of Stonyhurst College, for the loan of several other indispensable volumes; to the Rev. Herbert Thurston, S.J., for verifying references and copying extracts; to the authorities of the Reading-Room at the British Museum for unfailing and helpful courtesy during the months of August and September 1898; and last, but by no means least, to the Editor of the *Tablet*, for permission to republish the articles mentioned above.

It only remains to give a list of the principal works of which use has been made in the compilation of the present biography. A few words have been added here and there which may help to explain the character of some of the works enumerated. To avoid the cumbersome iteration of lengthy titles, many of these works have been referred to in the course of the book by the author's or editor's name alone.

[1] *Historisches Jahrbuch der Görres-Gesellschaft*, 1899, p. 107.

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BENEDETTO DA FIRENZE, FRA (O.P.), "Vulnera Diligentis." This unpublished tract, by a contemporary and fervent disciple of Savonarola, tells the story of his career in the form of a dialogue between "Agricola" (*i.e.* Benedetto himself) and "Volpe," or, in one part, between "Agricola" and "Propheta" (Savonarola). Considerable extracts from it are given in Villari, i. Append. pp. lxxxiv. *sqq.*, and ii. Append. pp. lxxxiii. *sqq.* The publication of the whole, together with the "Giornate" of Lorenzo Vivoli, is much to be desired.

Benedetto da Firenze, Fra (O.P.). "'Cedrus Libani,' ossia vita di Fra Girolamo Savonarola, scritta in terzetti da Fra Benedetto da Firenze l'anno 1510; con note. Per cura del P. Vincenzo Marchese de' Predicatori." In "Archivio Storico Italiano,' Append. vol. vii., pp. 41 *sqq.* Firenze, 1850.

Bernardino da Lucca, Fra (O.P.). "Definitio contra injustam excommunicationem latam erga fratrem Hieronymum Savonarolam ferrariensem." In Mansi's Appendix to "Miscellanea Stephani Baluzii," i. pp. 593 *sqq.* Lucae, 1761.

" " " "Discorso sopra la dottrina et opere del reverendo Padre fra Girolamo Savonarola . . . fatto in Roma sotto . . . papa Paulo IV. alla presenza dell' illustrissimi . . . Cardinali della Santa Inquisitione . . . 1558." In Quétif, ii. 561 *sqq.*

Botonio Timoteo (O.P.). See below under Burlamacchi, P.

Burlamacchi Pacifico (O.P.). "Vita del P. F. Girolamo Savonarola, riveduta poco dopo ed aggiunta dal P. F. Timoteo Botonio" (O.P.). Lucca, 1761. The "Life" which, since the days of Mansi, who first published it, has borne the name of Burlamacchi, was certainly not written by him. In most of the MSS. in which it has been preserved it is not even attributed to him, or is ascribed to him only by a later hand. Fra Pacifico Burlamacchi, who entered the convent of S. Marco in 1499, the year after Savonarola's death, died in 1519. But the biography ascribed to him in Mansi's MS. is based, as Villari has shown, on an anonymous and hitherto unpublished *Vita Latina*, which was written by an inmate of S. Marco between 1520 and 1530. By "Burlamacchi," then, we must be understood to mean the unknown author, who, by a convention now generally accepted, is usually cited under that name. Quétif, writing while "Burlamacchi" was still unpublished, quotes from him under the name of "P. Timotheus Perusinus." "Father Timothy of Perugia" was the "P. F. Timoteo Botonio" who is mentioned in some of the MSS. as having revised and enlarged the work of Burlamacchi. Whoever the author of the "Life" may have been, his work derives its value from being a reproduction, with comparatively unimportant modifications, of the *Vita Latina*. (See Villari, Pref. pp. viii *sqq.*)

CAPPELLI, ANTONIO. "Fra Girolamo Savonarola e notizie intorno il suo tempo." In "Atti e Memorie delle RR. deputazioni di Storia patria per la provincie Modenesi e Parmesi," vol. iv. Modena, 1869. Principally letters from Manfredo Manfredi, Ferrarese envoy at Florence, to Ercole d'Este, Duke of Ferrara.

CERRETANI, BARTOLOMMEO. "Storia Fiorentina." Considerable extracts from this unpublished work are given in Ranke, "Historisch-bibliographische Studien," pp. 335 *sqq.*

CINOZZI, FRA PLACIDO (O.P.). "Estratto d'una epistola fratris Placidi de Cinozis Ordinis Praedicatorum S. Marci de Florentia, de vita et moribus reverendi patris fratris Hieronimi Savonarole de Ferraria, fratri Jacobo Siculo, eiusdem Ordinis Vicarius generalis (*sic*), post mortem dicti Prophete." In Villari and Casanova, pp. 3 *sqq.* Firenze, 1898. This is probably the earliest biographical notice of Savonarola. From it a good deal of Burlamacchi's "Life" is taken verbatim. Cinozzi was a diligent hearer and disciple of Savonarola, and his "Letter" appears to have been written shortly after Fra Girolamo's death.

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COSCI, ANTONIO. "Girolamo Savonarola e i nuovi documenti intorno al medesimo." In "Archivio Storico Italiano," Quarta Serie, iv. 282 *sqq.*, 429 *sqq.* Firenze, 1879. A valuable essay on the fresh light thrown on the story of Savonarola's life and death by the documents embodied in the earlier volumes of the "Archivio Storico Italiano."

CREIGHTON, MANDELL (now Bishop of London). "A History of the Papacy during the period of the Reformation," vol. iii. "The Italian Princes, 1464-1518." London, 1887.

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"Eliot, George." "Romola." New Edition. London, 1878.

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Gherardi, Alessandro. "Nuovi Documenti e Studi intorno a Girolamo Savonarola." Seconda Edizione. Firenze, 1887. This collection, with the Editor's able introductory sections and notes, is the most valuable of all that have yet appeared. It contains documents, derived from various sources, which throw light on every stage of Savonarola's career.

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Grisar, Hartmann (S.J.). "Zu den neuen Publikationen über Savonarola." In "Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie," iv. 391 *sqq.* Innsbruck, 1880.

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" " "Storia Fiorentina." In "Opere Inediti," etc., vol. iii.

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"Irish Rosary, The." Dublin, 1898. A series (June to October) of anonymous articles on "Savonarola," chiefly concerned with the present writer's contributions on the same subject to *The Tablet* newspaper.

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Lottini, L. Giovanni (O.P.). "Fu veramente escomunicato Savonarola?" Milano, 1898.

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" " "Documenti Pisani intorno Fra Girolamo Savonarola." In "Archivio Storico Italiano," Terza Serie, xiii. 180 *sqq.* Extracts from the correspondents of the Anziani of Pisa with their envoys at Venice, concerning the affairs of Savonarola. Of importance only as illustrating the kind of hostile gossip that was prevalent.

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PASTOR, LUDWIG. "Geschichte der Päpste im Zeitalter der Renaissance," vol. iii. Freiburg, 1895.

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[QUÉTIF, JACQUES.] "Vita R. P. Fr. Hieronymi Savonarolae Ferrariensis Ord. Praedicatorum, Authore Ill. D. Joan. Franc. Pico Mirandulae Concordiaeque Principe, Notis accurata. . . . Additionibus insuper, Actis, Diplomatibus, Epistolis, Scriptorumque monimentis aucta et illustrata." 2 vols. Parisiis, 1674. The editor's name does not appear on the title-page or elsewhere. The "Additiones," a very valuable collection, are in vol. ii. Both volumes are referred to as "Quétif."

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SAVONAROLA, GIROLAMO. "Apologeticum Fratrum Congregationis S. Marci de Florentia." In Quétif ("Additiones") ii. 77 *sqq.*

" " "Compendium Revelationum inutilis servi Jesu Christi Patris Hieronymi de Ferraria Ord. Praedic. Impressit Florentiae ser Franciscus Bonaccursius a. sal. mdcccclxxxxv. v. non. dec." Also in Quétif, i. 216 *sqq.* (The tract, with a preface by Girolamo Benivieni, is paged continuously with Quétif's edition of Pico della Mirandola's "Life," as a supplement thereto. But the supplement appears to be an afterthought, as there is no reference to the tract on the title page, and "Finis" occurs on p. 212.)

" " "Del Dispregio del Mondo." In Villari i. Append. pp. viii. *sqq.* Also in Bayonne, iii. 5 *sqq.*

" " "De Ruina Ecclesiae." A Poem, composed in or about 1475, with explanatory notes by the author. In Villari and Casanova, pp. 402 *sqq.*

" " "De Ruina Mundi." A Poem, composed in 1472. In Villari and Casanova, pp. 400 *sqq.*

" " "De Simplicitate Vitae Christianae." "Libro di Frate Hieronymo da Ferrara Della Semplicità della Vita Christiana Tradocto in Volgare." Firenze, 1496. Also in Bayonne, i. 211 *sqq.*

" " "F. H. Savonerolae (*sic*) Ferrariensis Ord. Praed. de Veritate Prophetica. Dyalogus." S.l.s.a.

" " Lettere. (1) "R. P. Hieronymi Savonarolae Ferrariensis O.P., etc. Epistolae Spirituales et Asceticae." Ed. Quétif. Paris, 1764. (2) "Lettere Inedite di Fra G. S." Ed. Marchese. (See above, under MARCHESE.) (3) "Lettere di Fra G. S." In Villari and Casanova, pp. 419 *sqq.* (4) Many of these letters are also in Bayonne, vol. iii. (5) Others, of a more public character, in Quétif ("Additiones") vol. ii. (6) Others in Mansi's Appendix to Baluzius, i. 584 *sqq.* (see above, under MANSI); Gherardi, pp. 278 *sqq.*, etc.

" " Opere. (1) "Œuvres Spirituelles choises de Jérome Savonarole," etc. See above, under BAYONNE. (2) "Scelta di Trattati e altri Scritti di Fra G. S." In Villari and Casanova, pp. 335 *sqq.*

SAVONAROLA, GIROLAMO. "Prediche." The following are the principal series of the published sermons of Savonarola. The various sets are for the most part printed separately, and it has seemed unnecessary to give details as to the editions. We give, however, the dates of the delivery of the sermons, so far as these can be ascertained.

On the First Epistle of S. John. Advent, 1491 (or 1492).
On the Psalm: "Quam bonus." Advent, 1492 (or 1491).
"Super Arcam Noe." Lent, 1494.
On Aggaeus. Autumn and Advent, 1494.
On certain Psalms. Before and after Lent, 1495.
On Job. Lent, 1495.
On Amos and Zacharias. Lent, 1496.
On Ruth and Micheas. Summer, 1496.
On Ezechiel. Advent, 1496, and Lent, 1497.
On the Psalm: "Domine Deus meus." Ascension Day, 1497.
On Exodus. Lent, 1498.

Numerous extracts from the Sermons of Savonarola are also given in Villari and Casanova, pp. 31 *sqq.*; in Villari, i. Append. pp. xii. *sqq.*, xxviii. *sqq.*, and in the course of the work *passim*, and in Luotto.

" " "Triumphus Crucis: De Veritate Fidei," S.l.s.a. Also: "The Triumph of the Cross." Translated with Notes, etc., by O'Dell Travers Hill. London, 1868.

SCHNITZER, JOSEPH. "Savonarola im Lichte der neuesten Literatur." In "Historisch-politische Blätter für das katholische Deutschland," cxxi. 465 *sqq.*; 548 *sqq.*; 634 *sqq.*; 717 *sqq.* München, 1898.

TOCCO, FELICE. "Il Savonarola e la Profezia." In "Vita Italiana nel Rinascimento" (a collection of lectures by various authors). Milano, 1893.

VILLARI, PASQUALE. "La Storia di Girolamo Savonarola e de' suoi Tempi." Nuova Edizione. Seconda Impressione, 2 vols. Firenze, 1898. The Appendices to these two volumes contain a great mass of illustrative documents, of which the most important are the depositions at the trial of Savonarola and his companions, and the extracts from Fra Benedetto and Vivoli. (See under BENEDETTO and VIVOLI.)

Villari, P. and Casanova, E. "Scelta di Prediche e Scritti di Fra Girolamo Savonarola, con nuovi documenti intorno alla sua vita." Firenze, 1898.

"Vita Latina." See above, under Burlamacchi, P.

Vivoli, Lorenzi. "Giornate." Lorenzi Vivoli was that faithful disciple of Savonarola, to whose diligent reporting we are indebted for the preservation of most of the sermons preached by him from 1494 to 1498. The "Giornate" are a series of dialogues between "Soffia" and "Didimo," in which "Soffia" (*i.e.* Vivoli himself) gives his reminiscences of Savonarola. They are entirely similar in character to the dialogues in the "Vulnera Diligentis" of Fra Benedetto. (See above, under Benedetto.) Important extracts from this unpublished tract are given in Villari, i. Append. pp. lviii *sqq.* ("il Proemio," etc.), and ii. Append. pp. lxxi *sqq* ("il fine della terza ed il principio della quarta Giornata"), and pp. cviii *sqq.* ("la sesta Giornata").

NOTE.

A word may here be said on the use of quotation marks throughout this work. They must of course be taken to indicate that, where they are used, nothing has been added to the words of the writer or speaker who is quoted. By reason, however, of the prolixity which was habitual with Savonarola and with some of his contemporaries, a certain amount of compression has been occasionally used, without any explicit indication (beyond the present) that this has been done.

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CHAPTER XXIV

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CHAPTER I

GIROLAMO SAVONAROLA, 1452–81

GIROLAMO SAVONAROLA, the subject of this biography, was born at Ferrara on 21st September, 1452. The family name first appears in history in the person of one Antonio Savonarola, of Padua, who, in the middle of the thirteenth century distinguished himself by his patriotic resistance to the tyranny of Ezzelino da Romano, the captain-general of Frederick II. in Lombardy, and in memory of whom one of the gates of Padua is still known as the *Porta Savonarola*.[1] It would seem, however, that the ancestry of Girolamo cannot be continuously traced beyond another Antonio who lived about a century later, and of whom nothing is known but his name.[2]

In 1440, Michele Savonarola, the great-grandson of this second Antonio, was summoned to the court of Ferrara by the Marchese Niccolò d'Este, a prince who like others of his time loved to play the Maecenas, and to surround himself with learned men, as well as with brilliant courtiers; and here Michele became the progenitor of a branch of his family which has survived down to the present century.[3] After the death of the Marchese Niccolò, in 1441, Michele became court physician to his successors, Lionello († 1450) and Borso d'Este († 1471), by whom he was both esteemed and con-

[1] Villari, i. 1.

[2] Cittadella, *L'Albero Genealogico della fam. di S.*, in Gherardi, pp. 1 *sqq.*

[3] The Ferrarese branch of the family became extinct in 1844. The Paduan branch had still three representatives in 1877 (Gherardi, *loc. cit.*), and some members of the family may probably still survive. A diploma granted to Michele by Lionello d'Este commences with the words: "Delectabantur prisci illi excellentissimi et Reges et Principes, ut quisque magis poterat, apud se clariores et in quocumque virtutum disciplinarum ac bonarum artium genere praestantiores viros habere," etc. (Villari, i. Append. p. iii.).

siderably enriched.[1] He had five sons, the youngest of whom, Niccolò Savonarola, was the father of Girolamo, himself the third among five brothers. Of these, Ognibene, the oldest, followed—after the fashion of the day—the profession of arms; Bartolommeo, the second, has left no record; Marco, the fourth, after having entered the priesthood, followed Fra Girolamo into the Dominican Order, where he was known as Fra Maurelio; and Alberto, the youngest, became a physician, and in this capacity earned an enviable reputation for his charity to the poor.[2] Of Niccolò, the father of these sons, nothing whatever is known, except that he seems to have shown a due solicitude for Girolamo's education;[3] and it appears to be an altogether gratuitous conjecture of Villari's that he was a spendthrift.[4] It was, however, to his mother, Elena Buonaccorsi, and to his grandfather Michele, that the future preacher was chiefly indebted for his earliest training.[5] The age, as is well known, was one of great

[1] It was characteristic of this "age of bastard princes" that both Lionello and Borso were the illegitimate sons of Niccolò d'Este. They had been, however, legitimised, in order that the succession might be secured to them. Borso d'Este was raised to the rank of Duke of Ferrara in 1452, on occasion of the coronation of the Emperor Frederick III. He died in 1471, and was succeeded by Ercole, the legitimate son of Niccolò. Ercole became in after years an ardent admirer of Fra Girolamo, and the letters of Manfredi, his ambassador at the Florentine Court, published by Cappelli, throw a good deal of light on the history of the Friar.

[2] Pico (Quétif, i. 4) says of Michele: "Virum egregiè pium fuisse Michaelem *et pauperibus nulla mercede mederi solitum*," giving as his authority the testimony of his own mother, Bianca d'Este. "Alberto," says Burlamacchi, "fu medico assai dotto in quell'arte, *la quale esercitò in molta carità, medicando per l'amor di Dio gran numero di poveri*" (p. 13). Burlamacchi (pp. 12, 13) and Fra Benedetto (Villari, i. 3) enumerate the brothers of Savonarola as above. Cittadella, in his *Albero Genealogico della famiglia S.* (Gherardi pp. 1 *sqq.*), gives their names in the following order: Bartolommeo, Alberto, Ognibene, Girolamo, Marco. But it seems clear, from Girolamo's letter of farewell to his parents, of which we shall presently have occasion to speak, that Alberto was younger, not older, than himself, for he specially commends him to his father's care. Villari follows, as we have done, the authority of the earlier biographers, as against Cittadella.

[3] Pico, p. 6; Burlamacchi, p. 14.

[4] "Passò i suoi giorni bazzicando nella Corte, consumando il patrimonio che suo padre aveva cogli studii e colla industriosa perseveranza raccolto" (Villari, i. 2). No authority is given for this statement, or for a somewhat similar one which may be found in Marchese, *Sunto Stórico*, pp. 107-8. Michele had enjoyed a rich pension, as we learn from the diploma above referred to. This, of course, his son did not inherit. No further explanation is needed of the alleged circumstance that he was less wealthy than Michele.

[5] His indebtedness to his mother may be inferred from the affectionately confidential character of his letters to her. That Michele undertook his early education is asserted by Fra Benedetto, Pico, and Burlamacchi. Michele died about 1466 (Cittadella, in Gherardi, p. 6).

luxury and of splendid pageants, designed among other motives to keep the people in good humour, and to reconcile them to the despotism of their petty princes.[1] And among these princes the Marquises and Dukes of Modena and Ferrara were distinguished for the magnificence of their court. Of Borso d'Este Villari writes: "It may appear strange that we should say that he obtained so great a name chiefly by the luxury of his court, and by the festivities with which he continually amused the people of Ferrara; but it is no less true. . . . He was always attired in cloth of gold, and the richest stuffs of Italy were displayed in the dresses of his courtiers; . . . even his court fools became famous; and the printed descriptions of his *fêtes* circulated from one end of Italy to the other."[2] Michele Savonarola did not perhaps altogether escape the taint of the prevalent subservience. Tiraboschi mentions a work of his in praise of his patron Duke Borso.[3] But he seems to have had an eye for the contemptible side of court life, and his unpublished tract entitled *De nuptiis Battibecco et Serrabocca* ("Of the marriages of Chatterbox and Closelips") is a satire on the frivolity and buffoonery which were rife in Ferrarese society, and which disgusted while they amused him.[4] He was also the author not only of some medical works which enjoyed a certain repute in their time, but also of several ascetical tracts, and the contempt which from an early age Girolamo Savonarola manifested for the vanities of the world may perhaps be in part ascribed to the influence of his grandfather's writings. From his boyhood Girolamo was noted for his love of solitude and for his somewhat melancholy disposition,

[1] "La plebe vi inclina (*i.e.* alla tirannide) molte volte, perchè quando il tiranno ha del savio, ha sempre cura della abbundanza, *e la diletta spesso con feste e giostre e giuochi publici; e gli piace la magnificenza della casa e corte sua*, che sono le cose che pigliano le genti basse" (Guicciardini, *Del Reggimento di Firenze*, Opp. Med. ii. 213). Of Lorenzo de' Medici, Machiavelli writes: "In times of peace he caressed the city (of Florence) with feasting, and plays, and tournaments, and representations of ancient triumphs, to delight and entertain his people; his only design being to see them pleased, the city supplied, *and the nobles respected*" (*History of Florence*, *Eng. Trans.*, 1680, p. 188. *Cf.* Pastor, v. 101 *sqq.*).

[2] Villari, i. 10.

[3] *De felici progressu illustrissimi Borsi Estensis ad Marchionatum Ferrariæ* (Tiraboschi, *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, Firenze, 1809, vi. 447). Borso d'Este at least deserved praise for having successfully maintained his dominions in the enjoyment of peace, and for having abstained from acts of personal oppression (*Diario Ferrarese*, in Muratori, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, xxiv. 233).

[4] Cappelli, p. 9. Chatterbox and Closelips marry respectively Madame Loquacity and Madame Taciturnity.

and after a single visit to the ducal court he could never be persuaded to set foot in it again.[1]

When he was approaching his twentieth year the young man experienced, as so many others have done before and since, the pangs of disappointed love. From the year 1466 onwards the Savonarola household had for their next neighbour, in the Via di S. Francesco at Ferrara, a distinguished Florentine exile, Lorenzo Strozzi; and Fra Benedetto da Firenze, alone among Girolamo's biographers, has left it on record that Girolamo offered his hand to a young lady of the Strozzi family, who, according to Cittadella, can only have been Lorenzo's daughter, Laodamia.[2] She, however ("la quale fanciulla era nientedimeno bastarda e non legiptima"), forgetful as it would seem of the stain upon her own birth, replied with some haughtiness that such an alliance was ill suited to the dignity of so illustrious a house as that of the Strozzi. The retort was obvious: and if we may believe Fra Benedetto, Savonarola did not spare the feelings of the supercilious maiden. It should be added, however, that the incident seems to have made but a passing impression on the mind of Girolamo, for in a sermon preached many years later he plainly declares that he never had a mind to marry (non volsi mai donna).[3]

In the meanwhile, thanks to his habits of solitude and his earnest diligence, Girolamo had made remarkable progress in his studies, and had devoted himself in particular to that of philosophy and theology after the approved methods of his time, following St Thomas as his favourite author, but holding in abhorrence what he regarded as the vain subtleties over which the humanists, even more than the schoolmen, were apt to waste their energies. It is evident, too, that he had already at this time acquired a degree of familiarity with Holy Scripture which might perchance astonish some of those

[1] "Si dilettava assai di star solo. . . . Parco era nel conversare, standosi la piu parte del tempo ritirato e solitario. . . . Solo una volta in vita sua entrò nella Rocca dov'era la corte del suo Principe," etc. (Burlamacchi, pp. 14-15).

[2] Fra Benedetto, *Vulnera Diligentis*, in Gherardi, pp. 7 *sqq.* Michele Savonarola had purchased his house in 1452, a few months before Girolamo's birth. The Strozzi had been exiled from Florence since 1434, but it was not till 1466 that Lorenzo Strozzi came into possession of what had hitherto been the Palazzo Paganelli, which was separated from the Casa Savonarola by a narrow lane. Benedetto, who says that he learned the incident from Fra Maurelio, does not give the name of Girolamo's *innamorata*, but she has been identified by the genealogical and topographical researches of Cittadella (Gherardi, pp. 3, 4).

[3] Gherardi, p. 4.

—if any still survive—who imagine that ignorance of the Bible is one of the characteristic marks of an otherwise well-instructed Catholic layman.

But it was not merely as a matter of personal inclination that Girolamo Savonarola shunned the Court of Borso and of Ercole d'Este, and avoided the dissipations of a worldly life. His poem *De Ruina Mundi*, written in 1472, showed that he had looked about him to some purpose, that he took a comprehensive view of the state of affairs throughout Italy and elsewhere, that he was fully alive to the worst features of the Renaissance, with its revival of pagan ideals and pagan vices, and that he augured ill for the future.

"Were it not [he says] O Master of the world, that Thy providence is infinite, I should be chilled with horror on seeing the world turned upside-down, and virtue utterly travestied. . . . But I believe, O King of Heaven, that Thou dost delay Thy chastisements in order to punish the more severely those who are most guilty; or, perchance, because it is near at hand, Thou dost wait for the day of final judgment. . . . That man is esteemed happy who lives by rapine, and battens on the blood of other men, who robs the widow and the orphan, and brings the poor to ruin; that soul is deemed noble and of great price (gentil e peregrina) which can succeed in making most profit by force or fraud, and which despises heaven and Christ Himself. . . . The earth is so overcome with wickedness that it can never more lift its head. Its capital, Rome, lies prostrate (A terra se ne va il suo capo, Roma) never more to resume its noble office (of being the head of the world). . . . 'Tis not enough that Sulla, Marius, Catilina, Cæsar, Nero, should have injured her, now men and women vie with each other to inflict some wound upon her. Gone are the days of piety and the days of virtue (Passato è il tempo pio e il tempo casto). . . . Beware, my sons, that you put not your trust in any one who is robed in purple (Che a purpureo color tu non ti appoggie); flee from palaces and stately halls (loggie), and take care not to speak your thoughts save to a few; else you will have all the world for your enemy."

Filled as he was with such thoughts, it is not surprising that his mind should have turned to the religious life. But from the writing of impassioned poetry to the prose of resolute action, the transition is not always easy, and we have it on his own authority that at first he brushed aside the idea of becoming a monk or a friar, and even resolved that such a thing should never be. But the attraction of grace at last prevailed, and a sermon preached by an Augustinian friar at Faenza in 1474, determined him to take the once dreaded

step. Yet, foreseeing the opposition of his parents, he feared to make his resolution known to them, and it was not until after Easter of the following year that he at last left his home and family. The feast of St George was kept at Ferrara on 24th April, and the day was observed as a public holiday. Under cover of the general excitement he started unperceived for Bologna, and, having made the journey on foot, offered himself as a novice in the Dominican convent of S. Domenico.[1] Having been received there he immediately wrote to his father a letter which gives some insight into his character and disposition.

"The motives [he says] by which I have been led to enter upon the religious life are these: the great misery of the world, the wickedness of men . . . their pride, idolatry, and fearful blasphemies; whereby things have come to such a pass that no one can be found acting righteously. Many times a day have I repeated, with tears, the verse:

"'"'Heu, fuge crudeles terras, fuge littus avarum.'"'[2]

After telling how earnestly he had prayed for light, and after suggesting the reasons which should lead his father to rejoice rather than lament over the resolution which he had taken, he informs him that he has left "upon the books in the window" a paper which will more fully explain his state of mind. This paper, or tract, which has been brought to light in our own days, is entitled, *Del dispregio del Mondo* (*Of the contempt of the World*).[3] Like the poem *De Ruina Mundi*, it is an impassioned lament over the miserable condition of the world, which, for its cruel oppression and shameless moral corruption, is likened to Egypt in the days of the Exodus, and

[1] Pico, p. 11; Burlamacchi, p. 15; Villari, i. 16.

[2] The letter is given in full by Villari, i., Append. pp. v. *sqq.*

[3] A writer in the *Irish Rosary*, July 1898 (p. 313), made much of the ignorance of this tract displayed in the columns of the *Tablet*. But when the earlier articles of the *Tablet* series were written, the author of them had access only to Horner's English translation of the first edition of Villari's *Life*, which does not contain the *Dispregio;* and it was perhaps in some degree excusable that he should be unaware that the text had been given in full in the Appendix to the second edition of the Italian original. He did not, however, merely quote "Villari's opinion of it," but reproduced that writer's summary of the tract, the accuracy of which might, he thought, fairly be assumed. The *Dispregio* was first published by Capponi in 1862 (not 1868, as Bayonne and the writer in the *Irish Rosary* incorrectly state), in an edition of only eighty copies. It next appeared in a French translation in Bayonne's *Œuvres Spirituelles . . . de J. S.*, iii. 6 *sqq.* (published in 1880); and, lastly, the original text was made generally accessible by Villari in his second edition (1887). In the present memoir all references are to the recent reprint (1898) of this second edition of Villari.

to Sodom and Gomorrah. Vice, says the writer, is praised, virtue is scorned and derided.

"He who lives chastely and modestly is called a man of no spirit; he who believes and hopes in God is deemed a simpleton. But the man who knows how to plunder orphans and widows is called prudent, he who can hoard the greatest store of gold is deemed wise, and the man who can devise the most cunning fashion of robbing his neighbour is looked upon with respect. Everywhere does wickedness abound (omnia sunt plena impietate); everywhere does usury and robbery flourish; on every side are heard horrible and filthy blasphemies; the most abominable vices are everywhere freely practised. 'There is not one who acts aright, no, not one.' And yet there are simple folk, unlettered rustics, and untutored women, who put to shame the vaunted but false wisdom of the world; boys and youths who flee from the world and its lusts." Why should not he—the writer—follow their example? Why should not he rise up and, together with the little ones of Christ, take his flight from these scenes of cruelty, these haunts of unbridled avarice and ambition? Let the blind votaries of the world pass judgment on themselves, let them judge whether the end of the world be not at hand (an novissimum tempus sit). As for himself, he will flee from Egypt and from Pharaoh, and will sing with Moses, *Cantemus Domino*, and the rest, and with Simeon: *Nunc dimittis servum tuum . . . in pace.*[1]

It must, we think, be admitted that the words of this tract hardly justify the remark of Villari: "He besought the Lord that the waters of the Red Sea might open a passage for the good and might drown the wicked; but at the same time he cannot conceal the hope that the rod which is to command these waters might one day be put into his hands." The canticle of Moses, which Savonarola quotes, celebrates an accomplished fact rather than expresses a wish; and of the alleged hope that the rod of command might be put into his own hands there is no trace whatever.[2] But it is perhaps not hypercritical to see, both in the *De Ruina Mundi* and in the *Dispregio*, traces of a constitutional tendency to take a pessimistic view of the state of affairs; a tendency which is not, certainly, inconsistent with great personal holiness, but which, if not kept in

[1] Villari, i., Append. pp. viii. *sqq.*

[2] The *Irish Rosary* (p. 314) rightly calls attention to Villari's inaccuracy here. And it is right that we should entirely withdraw our own remark (based on Villari's error) about the alleged indication of "self-concentration" and "incipient pride." On the other hand, we cannot accept our critic's description of the *Dispregio*, as "nothing else than a texture of Scripture florets, beautifully woven, taken chiefly from the canticle of Moses . . . and the 'Nunc dimittis' of Holy Simeon." The two canticles in question are quoted only at the conclusion of the little document, whose "soul-stirring pages" are, we may observe, two in number (or three in Bayonne's French translation).

due check, might well lead, in later days, to regrettable exaggeration of speech, and possibly also to imprudence in action. The present writer has been charged with "betraying *la mania della critica*—a carping spirit," because it has seemed to him that in the earliest utterances of Savonarola some presage of his future might be found. But whoever is of opinion that in his later years Savonarola erred, and also that his error was in great measure the outcome of his natural disposition, will obviously be led to look for traces of that natural disposition even at the outset of his career. Rightly or wrongly, it is clear that from his early youth Savonarola took an exceedingly gloomy view of the condition of his times, and if there is any truth in the opinion that his subsequent schemes of reform were in some cases rather drastic, this shortcoming cannot be altogether dissociated from the pessimistic tendency revealed by the poem and the tract, of which we have given the substance.

For seven years Fra Girolamo lived in retirement in his convent, yet not without an earnest outlook upon the Church at large, as is attested by his ode *De Ruina Ecclesiae*. In this short piece the poet addresses himself to the Church, personified as a chaste virgin of venerable aspect, to whom he feelingly complains that the virtues of old times are no more; no more do preachers tell the truth boldly; no more do holy doctors shed abroad the light of sound doctrines; no more do saintly contemplatives, devout virgins, zealous priests and bishops, adorn the Church with their virtues. "Thus spake I," he says, "to that venerable and loving Mother (la pia Madre antica), out of the great desire that I feel to weep without ceasing (per gran desio che ho di pianger sempre)." Then the holy Virgin leads him into her cave, and in turn pours forth her own lament. Hither she has retired ever since she saw a proud harlot (the spirit of worldly ambition) enter the city of Rome, and bring everything to ruin. And when the youthful novice expresses the wish that these wings of pride could be clipped or broken, the answer is:

"Tu piangi e taci; e questo meglio parmi."[1]

[1] "Do thou weep and hold thy peace; so seemeth best to me."

The whole poem is expressed in highly figurative language, to which, however, the key is supplied in a series of notes by Savonarola himself. It is much to be regretted that Villari and Casanova (*Scelta*, pp. 402 *sqq.*) have given only a few stanzas of this canzone, with the corresponding notes. The very limited edition of the poems by Guasti is practically inaccessible, and we have only (in addition to the extracts in Villari and Casanova) the French translation by Bayonne, who does not give the notes.

It is to be observed that the "proud harlot" of Savonarola's poem is not the Church of Rome, however corrupted in the person of her rulers, but the pride, luxury, avarice, and ambition which had so taken possession of the city as (in his view) to rule it like a strumpet-queen. This idea of describing, under the image of the "scarlet woman" of the Apocalypse, the worldly spirit which had become dominant in Rome, did not originate with Savonarola. According to Felice Tocco, Piero Olivi, just two hundred years previously, had spoken of "the carnal church" as "l'empia Babilonia";[1] and Petrarch had spoken of Avignon, then the residence of the Popes, as "l'avara Babilonia, fontana di dolore, albergo d'ira, scuola d'errori, tempio d'eresie."[2] It is obvious, however, that Fra Girolamo here strikes the keynote that was to ring through so many of those later utterances in which with unsparing severity he inveighed against the vices of the Roman court. We are not now passing judgment upon these invectives, but merely pointing out that they have their root in the preacher's earliest writings.

That Fra Girolamo from the outset of his religious life distinguished himself by the most exact observance of the vows and of the rules of his Order, is the uncontradicted testimony of his earliest biographers. His practice of poverty, say Cinozzi and Burlamacchi, was most rigid, and he deeply deplored the relaxations in this matter which had crept into the convents of the Order. His purity was altogether beyond reproach or even the suspicion of a fault. To his superiors he was, at least in these early days, most docile in all things, and his spirit of humble obedience showed itself in the deference with which he treated not merely his equals but even his inferiors. A father of great authority, who had been his confessor for a considerable time, and whom Burlamacchi declares to have been

[1] "Così fa d'uopo che l'empia Babilonia
Nel profondo del mare si sommerga."

That "l'empia Babilonia" signifies "la chiesa carnale" is Tocco's comment, which may presumably be trusted.

[2] Felice Tocco, *Il Savonarola e la Profezia*, one of a collection of conferences published under the general title of *Vita Italiana nel Rinascimento* (Milan, 1893; pp. 354-57). We are glad to be able to correct an error into which we were led while preparing the articles on Savonarola for the *Tablet*. In one of these we had explained (with Villari, i. 24), that by the "proud harlot," Savonarola meant Rome. As the writer in the *Irish Rosary* has pointed out, Fra Girolamo's own interpretation of his own words (which we had not then seen) must be taken as decisive.

the B. Sebastian Maggi, and is said to have declared — with a freedom which a confessor in our days would hesitate to permit himself—that it was doubtful whether he was guilty even of venial sin deliberately committed.[1] As an instance, by no means without significance, of his solid virtue, we may mention that whereas already before his entrance upon the religious life he had conceived a marked distaste for the study of metaphysics, it is clear from his published writings on the subject that he devoted himself to such studies with all the zeal which the most perfect obedience could prompt.[2] All this being so, it is no matter for surprise that within seven years of the commencement of his novitiate his superiors appointed him to the responsible post of "lector" to the novices, a position which he filled first at Bologna and subsequently—as will hereafter appear—at Florence. At the same time, it may be permissible to surmise that it might have been better for himself, personally, had a longer period elapsed before he was advanced to such a post of authority. It seems to us that if ever there was a man who needed the guidance of another, not necessarily of higher intellectual gifts or superior virtue, but of a more evenly-balanced judgment and less impressionable character than himself, that man was Fra Girolamo Savonarola; and to the lack of such masterful guidance in the earlier years of his religious life may not improbably be attributed, at least in some degree, the aberrations (as we cannot but regard them) of his later career.[3]

[1] Cinozzi, p. 4; Burlamacchi, pp. 20, *sqq.* [2] Burlamacchi, p. 21.

[3] Here again we have had the misfortune to incur the strictures of our courteous critic in the *Irish Rosary*, who takes us to task for our presumption in venturing to find fault with the action of men so distinguished for holiness of life and other high qualities as Maggi and Bandello (*Irish Rosary*, p. 317). It must be remembered, however, that Maggi was precisely the man to whom, a few years later, Savonarola refused to submit when ordered to do so by the Pope, and that Bandello, as General of the Order, felt himself obliged to inhibit the paying of posthumous honours to Savonarola (Marchese, *Sunto Storico*, p. 106). It is at least possible that in after days both these distinguished men saw reason to regret the somewhat rapid promotion of Fra Girolamo to a position of trust and authority. Of course, if Savonarola's subsequent action be judged capable of a complete vindication, there is no need to call in question the prudence of his superiors in the matter of his first appointments. In this case it will only be necessary to regret the subsequent blindness of these same superiors; a consequence to which it is possible that our critic has not fully adverted. But if it be lawful to hold (with Benedict XIV. and other respectable authorities) that Savonarola afterwards fell, not necessarily into any grave fault, but into more than one serious error, then it is not superfluous to consider whether the way may have been in some degree paved for such a lapse in the circumstances of the earlier years of his religious life.

CHAPTER II

FIRST YEARS IN THE MINISTRY: ROME AND ITALY UNDER SIXTUS IV. AND INNOCENT VIII.

IT was in 1481 that Fra Girolamo began to exercise the ministry of preaching. His first course of sermons was delivered in the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli at Ferrara. Eight years afterwards, in a letter written to his mother from Pavia, where he was then engaged, he implies that his work for souls in his native city had not met with that measure of visible success which might have been desired. "Many a time it has been said to me at Ferrara, by those who saw me employed in this work of travelling from city to city [to preach] that our brethren must be greatly in need of men"—*i.e.* of competent preachers—"as who should say: 'If they set so worthless a man as you to so great a task, they must indeed be in need of workers.'"[1] The principle, he declares, still holds good that no man is a prophet in his own country. But it would obviously be ungenerous and unfair to press too closely such an avowal on the part of a man whose sensitiveness to any appearance of ill-success was the counterpart of his earnest zeal; and we may feel sure that the good seed sown at Ferrara did not fail to bear good fruit, even though the results were not visible to the eye of the preacher himself.

In the autumn of the same year the threatened outbreak of hostilities between the Venetians and Ercole d'Este occasioned a general disturbance of the various courses of study which were carried on at Ferrara.[2] The Dominican students were dispersed to other convents of the Order, and among them Fra Girolamo was sent to that of S. Marco at Florence. Fra Vincenzio Bandella, who

[1] Savonarola to his mother, 25th January 1490 (Marchese, p. 113).

[2] "Per cagion della guerra che avevon messa e Viniziani al Duca di Ferrara, s'era intromesso in detta città ogni studio generale e particulare" (Cinozzi, p. 10).

was at that time Prior of S. Marco, at once appointed him professor or "reader," of Holy Scripture in the convent, a choice which was greatly appreciated by his pupils, who held him in great veneration. His earnest exhortations to them to study the Bible were long remembered, and an eye-witness told Cinozzi how Fra Girolamo used to come to class with his eyes bathed in tears, as one who had prepared his lecture rather by meditation than by study.[1] He was further appointed to preach the following Lent (1482) in the church of S. Lorenzo, and Cinozzi, who himself attended this course of sermons, has left it on record that "neither his gestures nor his pronunciation gave satisfaction," so that before the end of Lent the audience had dwindled down to less than twenty-five persons, all told.[2] Meanwhile, large crowds flocked to hear the discourses of a man who in later years was to be numbered among the most bitter enemies of Fra Girolamo. This was the Augustinian Fra Mariano da Gennazzano, then preaching at Santo Spirito. Fra Mariano must certainly have been a man of considerable oratorical power, for Politian, who went to hear him, with a strong predisposition to criticise him unfavourably, declares that the very sight of the friar in the pulpit was enough to dispel his prejudices, and that he remained in a manner enchanted with his sermon. But the features of Mariano's eloquence which Politian praises are his musical voice, with its melodious cadences, his rhetorical pauses, his rounded periods;[3] qualities, it is needless to say, which do not necessarily characterise the truly apostolic preacher.

"I never knew [he adds] a more discreet and agreeable man. He neither repels his hearers by undue severity, nor deceives them (?) by too great leniency. Many preachers deem themselves lords of life and

[1] "Che più presto avea meditato qualche cosa che studiato la lezione" (Cinozzi, *loc. cit.*). He adds, however: "Ma, perchè la possedeva molto bene, sodisfaceva ottimamente." It would seem that for this part of Savonarola's career Cinozzi is the original authority from whom Burlamacchi (p. 23) has drawn.

[2] Nè in gesti nè in pronunzia satisfece quasi a nessuno, in modo che mi recordo . . . all ultimo restammo fra uomini, donne, e fanciulli, manco di xxv." This, then, is not, as we had conjectured (*Tablet*, 7th May, p. 721A), a mere exaggeration of Burlamacchi's. Burlamacchi says: "E d'avvertire che nel principio del suo predicare nè voce, nè gesti, nè modo alcuno aveva, che fusse convenevole ed accomodato a tale exercizio" (p. 21); a statement which hardly seems to justify the more emphatic expressions of Villari: "I suoi modi però e le forme del dire erano rozzi e negletti, la pronunzia aspra, le parola incolte, il gesto vivacissimo, quasi violento" (i. 72).

[3] Politian to Tristano Calco, 22nd March 1490 (Villari, i. 80).

death, abuse their powers, look askance at everything, and weary men by perpetual admonitions. *Mariano is moderation itself.* A stern censor in the pulpit, he has no sooner quitted it than he becomes genial and courteous."[1]

Affability and geniality are excellent qualities in themselves; and we may credit Fra Mariano with having at the outset wished to be, after the fashion set by the Apostle, "all things to all men." But the step from courteous affability to courtier-like servility is one which is only too easily taken; and Fra Mariano appears to have become a thorough courtier. He was in high favour with Lorenzo de' Medici, who had—as Machiavelli tells us—shown his esteem for the friar by building a convent of his Order (that of San Gallo) near Florence.[2] The favour thus shown him by Lorenzo was repaid in later days by a misplaced loyalty to his family, and Fra Mariano—as will appear in the sequel—was banished from Florence in 1497 in consequence of his complicity in a plot for the restoration of Piero de' Medici.

It is no matter for surprise that Fra Girolamo should have been so discouraged by this open and apparent failure as to have determined, in the bitterness of his disappointment, to renounce for ever the work of preaching, and even—if we may believe Burlamacchi—to have announced this determination to his handful of hearers. Nor were there wanting candid friends who urged him to take this resolution.[3] But such a purpose, even had it been in his power to carry it out, was not likely to be of long duration. A member of the Order of Preachers, inflamed as Fra Girolamo was with zeal for souls, and conscious of powers which only needed exercise to become in the highest degree effective, must surely have felt, sooner or later, that the call to work in the vineyard was too imperative to be disregarded on the strength of the ill-success of his first attempts.[4] But however this might have been, the matter was

[1] This passage, apparently from the letter above referred to, is given by Pastor, v. 183, after Reumont, *Lorenzo de' Medici*, ii. 390.

[2] Machiavelli, Works (*Eng. Trans.*) p. 188.

[3] "E anco essendoli detto da altri secondo che li udi' dire di poi più volte" (Cinozzi, p. 11). "Siccome anco da molti era consigliato, *et pubblicamente lo disse al populo*" (Burlamacchi, p. 24).

[4] Gherardi (pp. 38, 39) has brought to light two interesting letters from Giovanni Garzoni, a notable professor at Bologna, to Savonarola. Garzoni had been consulted by Fra Girolamo as to his prospects of success in the pulpit. His first letter is full of encouragement—of a sort. "Si philosophiam et theologiam cum oratoria conjunxeris, *immortalem laudem consequeris*." But in his second

settled for him by those to whom he owed obedience, and during the years which followed we find him repeatedly engaged in preaching in various towns of Tuscany and Lombardy. It is impossible, for lack of sufficient data, to give a connected account of these missionary expeditions, and it must be sufficient to mention, as known scenes of his labours, San Gimignano (1484-85), Brescia (1486), and Pavia. He retained, however, till 1486 his office of professor at S. Marco.[1]

Meanwhile he had attended, in quality of deputy or representative of his convent, the general chapter of his Order held at Reggio in 1482; and at this gathering of distinguished men, his words on whatever may have been the subject or subjects under debate appear to have attracted much attention, and to have gained for him the favourable notice of the famous Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, who was present.[2] According to Burlamacchi, this meeting gave occasion to Pico to endeavour—not without success—to induce Lorenzo de' Medici to procure the recall of Savonarola to Florence. But the dates are quite inconsistent with this statement.[3] In 1482 Savonarola had not yet left Florence, and his return to that city, after he had left it in 1486, did not take place till 1489. The detection of this circumstantial error, which is due to Gherardi, does not, however, necessitate the rejection of the whole story of Fra Girolamo's presence at the chapter, and of his meeting there with Pico della Mirandola.[4]

San Gimignano, which we have already mentioned as the scene of Savonarola's missionary labours in 1484 and 1485, is a small town in the neighbourhood of Siena, whose "monuments and lofty

letter he laments that Fra Girolamo has "declared war against Priscian, the grammarian," and in a bantering strain advises him to heal the wound which his own hand has inflicted. The letters are undated, and are perhaps separated by a considerable interval of time.

[1] Villari, i. 84-88.

[2] Burlamacchi (p. 24) says that Pico, "sentendo disputare fra gli altri il P. F. Girolamo, tanto restò preso dalla dottrina sua mirabile, che non gli pareva poi poter vivere senza lui." The somewhat detailed description of Savonarola's attitude and discourse on this occasion which is given by Villari (i. 78, 79) is supported by no reference to any authority.

[3] Burlamacchi, *ibid.* The date of the chapter has been determined by Gherardi, p. 378.

[4] Dr Creighton (v. 148) writes: "Gherardi . . . shows that the chapter at Reggio was held in 1482, which disposes of the story conclusively." But not of the whole story.

towers . . . and churches, still adorned with the charming productions of Domenico Ghirlandajo and Benozzo Gozzoli, still testify that [it] was once a flourishing seat of culture and of art."[1] It was here that for the first time Savonarola gave utterance in set form to those three propositions which were afterwards to play so important a part in his preaching:—

(1) The Church shall be scourged:
(2) And afterwards renovated:
(3) And this shall happen soon.

We have the authority of the repeated assertion of Fra Girolamo himself for saying that these famous propositions were not, in the first instance, put forward as the outcome of any special revelation, but simply as conclusions deducible from the application of the laws of divine Providence as these are enounced and exemplified in the pages of Holy Scripture.[2]

"It seemed to him [says Pico della Mirandola] that the majesty of divine justice required that terrible penalties should fall on wicked men, and especially on those who, being placed in authority, corrupt the people by their bad example at a time when the human race, sunk in wickedness (perdition), had for so many ages abused the patience of God, and when the peoples of Asia and Africa were involved in many errors and in the darkness of ignorance. He thought, too, that the order of divine providence indisputably demanded the same chastisements, seeing that from the very beginning of history (ab ipso rerum primordio) we have the record of a series of wonderful and mysterious judgments, whereby the lovable clemency and the terrible justice of God are alike made manifest."[3]

The writer goes on to speak, by way of illustration, of the punishment of our first parents, of the world by the deluge, of Egypt in the days of Pharaoh, and of the cities of the plain. And what was the state of things now? Popes were declared—and hardly any one doubted the truths of the assertion—to have gained their position by fraud and simony, and, when they had gained it, they indulged their worst passions, and appointed as cardinals and bishops men like-minded with themselves. They lived without true religion, and were even believed to scoff at the faith. From the vices of Popes, Pico passes to those of secular princes, who, he says, exercised a

[1] Villari, i. 76.
[2] *E.g. Compendium Revelationum* (Ed. Quétif), p. 226, and elsewhere.
[3] *Vita*, c. v.; Quétif, i. 17.

tyrannical oppression, and gave themselves up to rapine, to violence, to flattery, to lust, to sacrilege; and all this so commonly that it might truly be said, in the words of Holy Scripture, that not one could be found who did right.

That this passage from Pico's "Life" fairly represents, as he alleges, what Savonarola himself had told him of his own thoughts, may readily be admitted; and it must be remembered that in order to understand Savonarola's mind it is more important to know what he believed about contemporary history, than to ascertain the actual facts. Probably Fra Girolamo was persuaded that Innocent VIII., and perhaps even Sixtus IV., were men of personally wicked lives; for we can hardly regard the use of the plural number to be simply and solely a rhetorical device, and Pico is speaking of that period of Fra Girolamo's preaching which preceded the election of Alexander VI. And indeed from the biographer's point of view it does not greatly signify that Savonarola should have been misinformed as to the vices of this or that individual Pope of the three in whose calamitous times his career as a preacher fell. The signs of the times were sufficiently clear to one whose mental vision was that of the pure of heart, and fully justified him in declaring that such open and rampant wickedness could not for ever go unpunished, and that it must surely bring retribution, not merely in the unseen hereafter, but also in those chastisements of God which often fall upon human society in this visible world, though they do not always fall with heaviest stroke upon the most guilty.

The history of the reigns of Sixtus IV., Innocent VIII., and Alexander VI., has been made familiar to English readers, both Catholic and Protestant, by the historical works of Pastor and of Creighton. Dr Barry has recently expressed himself concerning this period in the following terms:

"He [Savonarola] had been driven by war from Ferrara to S. Mark's at Florence in 1481. The war was due to Sixtus IV., one of that evil succession in the Papal chair which, between Paul II. and Paul III., during some sixty years, scandalised Christendom by their luxury, their greed, their vices, or their paganism. None among them has left a more dismal inheritance of scandalous stories than Sixtus IV. In all, however, the 'solicitudo omnium ecclesiarum' was subordinate to the crooked and atrocious policy of a petty Italian prince, intent upon aggrandising his resources and establishing his house upon the ruins of the neighbouring States, regardless of the thunder that was already filling the heavens with

a purple cloud. Those who have searched into the annals of the time agree in this judgment, however they may vary in the strength of the language that expresses it.[1]

We quote these words because they seem to express just that view of the situation which Savonarola himself undoubtedly took. We do not ourselves believe that either Sixtus IV. or Innocent VIII. (during the years of his pontificate) can be justly accused of personal immorality, still less of "paganism."[2] Indeed, the piety of Sixtus, and in particular his devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, is well attested.[3] And he might more reasonably have been charged with reckless prodigality than with grasping avarice.[4] But his unblushing nepotism, wherein he far outstripped the worst offenders among his predecessors, and was equalled only by those who immediately followed him, is notorious; and it was mischievous to the last degree.[5] Nor can either Sixtus or Innocent be acquitted of responsibility for the intrigues, or of complicity—at least by silence and allowance—in the scandalous excesses of the unworthy men whom, for family or political reasons, they advanced to the highest positions in the Church and in the Papal States.[6] And it was, in fact, precisely these unworthy promotions under Sixtus IV. which rendered possible the choice of his successor Innocent VIII., and which paved the way for that crowning scandal, the simoniacal election

[1] *Savonarola : In Memoriam* (*S. Peter's Magazine*, May 1898), p. 167.

[2] "As regards Infessura's most serious accusation, that of gross immorality, in that corrupt age such a charge was but too frequently flung at any enemy. . . . No trustworthy contemporary . . . has a word to say on the subject" (Pastor, iv. 417 *sqq.*). "Infessura . . . has blackened his memory with accusations of the foulest crimes. These charges, made by a partisan who writes with undisguised animosity, must be dismissed as unproved" (Creighton, v. 115). When Villari writes (i. 25), "La scandaloza libidine di Sisto non conosceva limiti di sorte alcuna," he is following Infessura, and showing himself to be no safe guide.

[3] "Cujus ante imaginem ita intentis et mente et oculis orare solitus erat, ut horae spatio nunquam connivere sit visus" (Sigismondo de' Conti, *apud* Creighton, v. 113). "With touching perseverance, the feeble old man made his pilgrimages of devotion to the churches of Santa Maria del Popolo and della Pace, which he had built in honour of the Blessed Virgin" (Pastor, iv. 418).

[4] Pastor, iv. 428.

[5] This is fully admitted by Pastor (iv. 419), and strongly urged, as might be expected, by Creighton (v. 62, 63). "Other Popes," he writes, "had been nepotists a little, but to Sixtus IV. nepotism stood in the first place."

[6] Pastor (*loc. cit.*) speaks of "that unfortunate attachment to his nephews . . . which entangled him in a labyrinth of political complications, from which, at last, no honourable exit was possible."

of the ever-infamous Alexander VI.[1] Sufficient allowance, it is true, has not always been made for the difficult position in which Sixtus found himself on his succession to the Papacy, nor have the motives which actuated him been always justly estimated. He cannot fairly be blamed for having wished by every lawful means to consolidate the dominions which he held in trust for the Church, or for having sought to round off his frontiers by such a transaction as the purchase of Imola from Galeazzo Sforza of Milan, by way of protection against the dangers to be apprehended from intriguing neighbours.[2] Nor again is it to be wondered at that he should have desired to be served by subordinates who would, as might be supposed, be thoroughly devoted to himself, and who might be relied upon to carry out those vigorous measures of home government which could alone secure the internal peace and well-being of the States of the Church, an object which he undoubtedly had at heart.[3] And it may not unreasonably be maintained that the effective carrying out of this twofold purpose would in the long run have greatly conduced to the welfare of the Church at large.[4]

But granting that his aims were less crudely ambitious than they are deemed to have been, even by so fair-minded an historian as Dr Creighton, it cannot be pretended that Sixtus had solely in view the welfare of the Church. And even had his motives been as purely unselfish as they were in reality mixed, it must not be forgotten that the aim and the end do not justify the means. Assuredly, no aim or end could justify the promotion of the crowd of needy relatives whose mischievous influence was the bane of

[1] Pastor, iv. 416; v. 233.

[2] Among these neighbours not the least dangerous was Lorenzo de' Medici, whose treacherous conduct towards the Pope is dealt with by Pastor (iv. 270 *sqq.*, 291 *sqq.*).

[3] On the home government of Sixtus IV., *cf.* Pastor, iv. 426.

[4] When Dr Creighton (iii. 101) exhibits Sixtus in the light of "an Italian prince who was engaged in consolidating his dominions into an important State," and says that he "pursued" this object "passionately, to the exclusion of the other duties of his office," and again (p. 102), that "the object which Sixtus IV. set before himself was not a lofty one," we are inclined to think that he is hardly fair to the Pope. Given the temporal power as an actual fact, it is easy to see how the duty of establishing the government of the Papal States on a satisfactory basis might seem to claim the first place in the order of execution, though not in that of ultimate importance. And the same view of the situation appears to have been taken by a much greater man than Sixtus, his nephew, Julius II.

this disastrous pontificate.[1] The fault, and it was a grievous one, brought with it its own retribution. The instruments of his choice proved too powerful for the hand that would have wielded them; and the naturally energetic character of Sixtus degenerated into a lamentable weakness under the domination of the untamed and untrained upstarts in whose hands he had placed the reins of power. The mad extravagance, the scandalous luxury, the unblushing immorality of Cardinal Pietro Riario received no effective check from the Pope, who seems, indeed, to have been infatuated in his affection for this graceless nephew. And the insatiable ambition of Pietro's brother, the Count Girolamo Riario, entailed political consequences in which Sixtus only too readily allowed himself to be involved.[2]

It is, moreover, important to notice, that the circumstances of the time were such as to bring the misdeeds of the Pope, or rather of his representatives, very prominently under the notice of Savonarola. It was shortly before the departure of Girolamo from his father's house for the Dominican novitiate, that Eleanora of Aragon, daughter of Ferrante, King of Naples, arrived at Ferrara as the wife of Ercole d'Este. And the reception of the newly-married couple in Rome, on their way from Naples, had been on a scale of sumptuous magnificence, "which startled even the luxurious princes of Italy." This was mainly the work of Pietro Riario, who achieved thereby an unenviable though splendid notoriety throughout Italy, and more particularly in the city of Fra Girolamo's

[1] Five of the nephews of Sixtus were made cardinals by him, viz. Giuliano and Cristoforo della Rovere, Girolamo Basso, Pietro Riario, and Raffaelle Sansoni. Of these only two, Giuliano della Rovere (afterwards Julius II.) and Girolamo Basso, were in any way worthy of their high office. Girolamo Riario, brother of Pietro, was made Count of Forlì and afterwards of Imola, and married Caterina, daughter of Galeazzo Sforza, Duke of Milan; Lionardo della Rovere married a natural daughter of Ferrante of Naples, and was made Duke of Sora; Girolamo della Rovere married the daughter and heiress of Federigo, Duke of Urbino; while for other members, lay and clerical, of the Rovere and Riario families, matrimonial alliances and ecclesiastical appointments, only less distinguished, were plentifully provided.

[2] Dr Pastor, following Schmarsow, speaks of the character of Sixtus as showing moments of great energy alternating with intervals of reaction and weakness, and adds with truth: "The crafty Girolamo relentlessly turned these weaker moments to account" (iv. 430). Dr Creighton writes (iii. 103): "It is impossible not to feel that the low savagery and brutal resoluteness of Count Girolamo were echoes of the natural man of Sixtus IV., which (in his case) had been in some measure tempered by early training and the habits of self-restraint."

birth.[1] This same cardinal was, moreover, about the same time, created Archbishop of Florence, and his solemn progress, as Legate of Umbria, though Florence, Bologna, Ferrara, Milan, and Venice, served to impress upon the minds of the inhabitants an indelible memory of the lengths to which the pompous splendour of a haughty ecclesiastical parvenu could go.[2] But worse than this was to follow.

In 1478 the nefarious conspiracy of the Pazzi, in which Girolamo Riario and Francesco Salviati, Archbishop of Pisa, were implicated as principals, took effect in the sacrilegious murder of Giuliano de' Medici in the Cathedral of Florence, and Lorenzo himself narrowly escaped the same fate.[3] It is absolutely untrue to say that Sixtus had any hand in this awful crime.[4] But it can hardly be questioned that he had it in his power to take effective steps for its prevention at a time when he must have foreseen, to say the least, the probability that a murder would be committed;[5] and the necessity under which he found himself of protesting against the utter disregard of ecclesiastical immunities, and of the most elementary form of justice, with which Salviati was punished by the Florentine authorities, and against the unjust, as well as illegal, imprisonment of Cardinal Sansoni-Riario, unfortunately gave a colour of plausibility to the opinion of those who regarded Sixtus as an accomplice in the crime.[6] Moreover, the memory of the interdict which Sixtus

[1] The proceedings are described in detail by Pastor, iv. 241 *sqq.*; Creighton, iii. 64; Gregorovius, vii. 233 *sqq.*

[2] Pastor, iv. 250; Gregorovius, vii. 235 *sqq.* The Cardinal died a few months after his return to Rome (1474).

[3] Lorenzo had wished to purchase Imola from Galeazzo Sforza, but Sforza, yielding to the Pope's entreaties, had sold the city to him instead, and Girolamo Riario had been appointed to this lordship. Lorenzo had retaliated by supporting Niccolò Vitelli, lord of Città di Castello, in his rebellion against the Pope. Sixtus, in his turn, had transferred the management of the Papal exchequer from the Medici to the rival family of the Pazzi. An additional cause of dissension had occurred in the appointment of Salviati to the archbishopric of Pisa against the will of Lorenzo. To these circumstances, and to the family quarrels between the Medici and Pazzi, must be ascribed the coalition of Girolamo Riario and Archbishop Salviati in this nefarious design against Lorenzo and his brother Giuliano. The best account of the conspiracy is in Pastor, iv. 300 *sqq.*

[4] This is clear from the confession of Montesecco, quoted by Pastor (*loc. cit.*) and Creighton (iii. 75).

[5] Creighton, *loc. cit.*; *cf.* Pastor, iv. 312, who, though he blames Sixtus, is perhaps too lenient in his judgment.

[6] To cite only two instances, Guicciardin (*Storia Fiorentina*, p. 37) says plainly: "Concorreva in questo trattato non solo il conte, ma eziandio la Santità

had laid upon the city of Florence on this occasion was still fresh when, just twenty years later, Savonarola laughed to scorn the threat of a similar interdict, repeatedly uttered by Alexander VI.

So, too, the war with Ferrara, though not precisely "due to Sixtus IV.," was undoubtedly due to his nephew, Girolamo Riario, and what seemed like an unscrupulous attempt at spoliation, to which the Pope gave his full sanction, could hardly fail to make a deeper impression on the mind of Fra Girolamo than it might otherwise have done, when he saw it directed against his own native city.[1] It is true that, before the close of 1482, the Pope concluded a peace with Naples, Milan, and Florence, whereby the possession of his States was guaranteed to the Duke of Ferrara; but the war was continued by Venice. Sixtus now turned his arms against that Republic, and the Florentine interdict of 1478 was followed by the Venetian interdict of 1484. And even apart from the special injustice of the war against Ferrara, it is clear that the honour of the Holy See was seriously compromised by complicity in the petty rivalries of the Italian States. It was the news of a peace which he deemed dishonourable between the League and Venice that hastened the death of a Pope whose reign, notwithstanding his many personal good qualities, which have been too often overlooked, had been on the whole a most grievous calamity to the Church.

It is not easy to say in what light Fra Girolamo regarded the election of Innocent VIII. The inscription which prefaces the poem called *Oratio pro Ecclesia*, written shortly after that election, seems to show that he regarded the peaceful conclusion of the conclave as the result of a divine intervention; while, on the other

del Papa ne era conscia"; and Nardi writes: "Dagli sdegni di queste due famiglie fu causata la infrascritta perniziosa congiura . . . *secondo che allora si diceva* non senza saputa del medesimo Pontefice" (i. 17). Of the prompt and savage vengeance taken on this occasion Guicciardini (pp. 40 *sqq.*) speaks at some length. Salviati, after being flogged, was hanged without trial; and more than fifty persons, among whom some were certainly innocent, were executed on the same day, and many others later. Cardinal Sansoni-Riario, a mere youth, and free from complicity in the crime, was held prisoner for some weeks (*cf.* Pastor, iv. 314, *sqq.*).

[1] Pastor has shown (iv. 350) that Sixtus had a real grievance against d'Este. But it may safely be said that he would never have gone to war with Ferrara but for the intrigues of Girolamo Riario with Venice. He sought the support of the Republic for his designs upon Naples, and the duchy of Ferrara was held out as a bait (Pastor, *loc. cit.*).

hand, it is clear from the poem itself that he was still full of apprehensions for the future.[1] The opening lines, which occur again at the end of the poem, are these :—

Jesu, dolce conforto e sommo bene
D'ogni affannato core,
Risguarda Roma con perfetto amore.

Rome, or more explicitly the "holy Roman Church," has been brought by the demon to a sad pass.

Soccorsi a la Romana
Tua Santa Chiesa, che il demonio atterra, etc.

The principal reason for the poet's dread of impending disaster lies in the wealth and in the corresponding avarice of the clergy :—

E quanto sangue, oimè ! tra noi s' aspetta
Se la tua man pietosa,
Che di perdonar sempre si diletta,
Non la riduce a quella
Pace che fu quand' era poverella.

But if the election of the new Pope seemed for a moment to be due to a special intervention of Providence for the avoidance of a schism, the history of Innocent's reign is enough to convince the student of ecclesiastical history that Fra Girolamo must have seen his worst apprehensions only too speedily realised. It would be unjust to Innocent, as it would be unjust to Sixtus, not to credit him with a genuine desire for the welfare of the Church. But both Pontiffs seem to have been infatuated with the idea that the cause of God can be forwarded by the adoption of a thoroughly worldly policy, and that self-seeking can go hand in hand with the duty of seeking the Kingdom of God. As Girolamo Riario, after the death of his brother, Cardinal Pietro, had ruled Sixtus IV., notwithstanding that Pope's admitted force of character, so the weak and vacillating Innocent allowed himself to become a tool in the hands of Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, and of his own son (born before his entrance

[1] The poem bears this superscription : " Oratio pro Ecclesia—Quando, mortuo Sisto IV., suscitavit diabolus dissentionem in Ecclesia : 1484, de mense augusti. *Dominus igitur apposuit manum ;* et facta concordia, in brevi electus est Innocentius VIII., non sine admiratione ovium, quae de schismate dubitabant " (Villari and Casanova, *Scelta*, p. 413).

into the ecclesiastical state) Franceschetto Cibò.[1] And more than this; to the scandal of unblushing nepotism was now added the further scandal of a Pope eager to arrange, and to celebrate with almost unparalleled magnificence, lucrative and politically advantageous marriages for his own children and grandchildren.[2]

The condition of Rome itself under these Popes may be truly, and without exaggeration, described as disgraceful. While Pinturricchio and Ghirlandajo, and Melozzo da Forlì and Perugino and Mantegna and others were busily engaged in the adornment of the Sistine Chapel, of the Vatican, and of other palaces and churches; while numerous sacred edifices were being erected, which too often testified to the wealth and ostentation rather than to the devotion of their founders; while the streets of Rome were being straightened, and widened, and paved;—these same streets were daily and nightly the scene of murderous brawls, of which the open feuds of the della Valle and Santa Croce, of the Colonna and Orsini, afforded only the most noteworthy examples. Of the venality and corruption which prevailed among the officials in the Papal Court, and of the increasing prevalence of sensual vice even among ecclesiastics of the highest standing, it is needless to speak in detail. It may be enough to recall to mind, as an indication of the state of affairs, that when Lorenzo de' Medici sent his son Giovanni (afterwards Pope Leo X.) to Rome, to be invested, at the early age of eighteen, with the dignity of cardinal—to which he had already been appointed three years earlier—this not over-scrupulous father warned the youthful ecclesiastic that he was going to a city which was a very sink of iniquity, and that it behoved him to take every precaution to preserve himself from contamination.[3]

And of the rest of Italy what is to be said, but that this was the dark age of a race of petty despots, all of them—with hardly an exception—debased in character as many of them were tainted in

[1] Pastor, v. 242, 265, 368 *sqq*. Giovanni della Rovere, Giuliano's brother, was made captain-general of the Papal forces. As regards Franceschetto, it must be remembered that he was thirty-five years of age at the time of his father's election (Creighton, iii. 120 *note*). "It is certain that from the moment Giovanni Battista [Cibò, *i.e.* Innocent VIII.] entered the ecclesiastical state, all the accusations against the purity of his private life cease" (Pastor, v. 241).

[2] We allude to the marriages of Franceschetto Cibò to Maddalena de' Medici, and of Battistina, the Pope's grand-daughter, with Don Luigi, grandson of Ferrante of Naples (Pastor, v. 269, 285 *sqq*).

[3] Pastor, v. 358 *sqq*.

blood; tyrannising over their people with heedless oppression, and too often exercising and setting the example of a worse kind of tyranny by their shameless profligacy; continually engaged in plotting against one another, and plotted against, in their turn, by their own subjects; that the murder of Giuliano de' Medici in the Cathedral at Florence, in 1478, had been preluded by that of Galeazzo Sforza on S. Stephen's Day, 26th December 1476, in the Church of S. Stefano at Milan; and that these tragedies were only the most conspicuous and successful examples among a score of treacherous murders in the highest ranks of society; that it was an age of decadence for the religious orders no less than for the secular clergy; and that among the laity the vaunted Renaissance was in too many instances nothing better than a re-birth of ancient paganism, with its unfaith and its nameless vices? [1]

There was, of course, as Dr Pastor has shown, a brighter side to the picture. Holy men and women lived their lives in the fifteenth century as they have done in every age of the Church. The outburst of fresh life and vigour which characterised the Renaissance period was, to a considerable extent, turned to good account, and diverted into worthy channels. The wide-spread demoralisation of the ruling classes was after all by no means universal, even in the higher ranks of society, and it had certainly not yet taken possession of the middle classes and of the poor. There is abundant evidence in the diaries and chronicles of the time that the spirit of faith and of charity was still strong in the people; and were we to confine our attention to the numerous charitable institutions which adorned the city of Florence as the fifteenth century was drawing to a close, we might almost imagine that we were reading the history of a golden age of religious fervour.[2]

[1] "With a few honourable exceptions, almost all the Italian princes of the Renaissance were steeped in vice; the crimes of the Borgia family were not without parallels in other princely houses. Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini, in his 'History of Frederick III.' says: 'Most of the rulers of Italy in the present day were born out of wedlock.' When Pius II. came to Ferrara in 1459, he was received by seven princes, not one of whom was a legitimate son. . . . Cruelty and vindictiveness went hand in hand with immorality, etc." (Pastor, v. 114. *See* the whole of the second section, pp. 98-182, of the Introduction to this volume). The story of Galeazzo's murder (and of the wickedness which provoked it) is told by Creighton (iii. 72 *sqq.*), and more briefly by Pastor (iv. 290). *Cf.* Villari, i. 28, 29.

[2] On the brighter aspects of the Renaissance period in Italy, *cf.* Pastor, v. 1-97.

On the whole, however, it cannot be denied that, at the time of which we speak, the evil influences that were at work threatened to be victorious. The ruling classes were, as has been said, deeply corrupted, and the poison was rapidly spreading through every stratum of society.

Such, very briefly and roughly sketched, was Italy when Savonarola, no longer an unknown friar, but a preacher who had already made his mark, came to Florence for the second time, never again to leave—except for very brief intervals—the city of his adoption.

CHAPTER III

THE PREACHER: HIS TEACHING AND HIS METHODS

WHEN Fra Girolamo returned to Florence in 1489, or early in 1490, it was to resume his office of professor or reader at S. Marco. His lectures on the Apocalypse, however, which were delivered during the following summer "under a damask rose tree at the end of the garden," were attended not only by his own brethren, but by many of the most learned men in Florence. And as the number of his auditory daily increased, so that the place was incapable of accommodating all who wished to hear him, both his brethren and his lay hearers began to urge him to speak again in public. One Sunday evening, in the guest hall, their entreaties became more than usually importunate. "Pray," he said, "till next Sunday, and you will understand what is to be done"—that is to say, they were to pray that he might be guided to act for the best in the matter. When Sunday came round once more, he told them that on that day week he would preach in the church, adding, says Burlamacchi, that he would continue to do so (either in S. Marco or elsewhere in Florence) for more than eight years, as in fact he did.[1] The first sermon of this long course of preaching was delivered on Sunday, 1st August 1490.

The same writer graphically describes the eagerness of the crowds which now flocked to hear a man who, disregarded as he had been a few years previously, had since made himself a name in so many cities of northern Italy, and whose private discourses had already attracted the attention of many of the *élite* of Florence.[2]

[1] "Circondato egli di nuovo da Frati per haver la risposta, disse lor sorridendo con allegra faccia: Domenica prossima legeremo in Chiesa, et sarà letione et predicatione; aggiungendo: Et predicherò piu d'otto anni; come poi si verificò" (Burlamacchi, p. 28). On the dates here given, see Gherardi, pp. 373 *sqq.*

[2] Villari (i. 94) has given a rather fanciful picture of the effects of this first sermon, attributing to a single occasion what Burlamacchi says of the general effect of a whole series of discourses.

He continued his expositions of the Apocalypse, and, as Villari puts it, "the walls of S. Marco now echoed for the first time with his three famous conclusions." The effect of his preaching was from the first marked, yet various. It awakened enthusiasm, aroused opposition, in some cases even provoked contempt. On the whole, the prevailing judgment seems to have been unfavourable, not indeed in its estimate of his oratorical powers, which were unquestionably of the highest order, but in its attitude towards the novelties—as they seemed—which he put forth.[1] But notwithstanding external opposition, and internal feelings of discouragement and depression, he held on his way with that fearless courage which characterised him throughout his career.[2]

And now, before we proceed to follow the series of events, it seems desirable to say something in general concerning the leading features of his teaching from the pulpit. Here, however, we find ourselves confronted with a very real difficulty. We had been inclined to make it a matter of reproach against Villari and Casanova that the extracts from Fra Girolamo's sermons which they have given, the former in his "Life," and both together in the recently published *Scelta de Prediche* are almost exclusively of a polemical or denunciatory character; whereas it would be a great mistake to suppose that all his preaching was of this kind. This reproach it had been our wish to avoid in the present volume; and lest it should be thought that we wish to minimise his great and conspicuous merits by the familiar device of "faint praise," we had determined—so far as the space at our disposal would allow—to present the reader with a series of selected passages which might serve to illustrate his ordinary manner when dealing with ordinary and non-contentious topics. But, in fact, Savonarola's sermons, except when he launches out into the language of invective or of self-defence, do not readily lend themselves to quotation, at least in English. Very

[1] Nel qual tempo commiciò a suscitarsi gran contraditione, et a dividersi quasi tutta la città, dicendo alcuno chi'egli era semplice et buono homo; alcuni ch'egli era dotto ma astutissimo; molti che attendeva a visioni false et stolte" (Burlamacchi, p. 28).

[2] Dipoi crescendo tuttavia più la grandissima contraditione; egli nel considerarla diventava alle volte pusillanime," etc. (Burlamacchi, *ibid*, and similarly Savonarola himself in his *Compendium Revelationum;* Quétif, ii. 227). On the other hand, he bears witness to his own outspoken boldness at this time. "Ricordatevi voi già parecchi anni sono quando io cominciai predicare la in S. Marco; che io vi dicevo che io ero la gragnola et che [chi] non la volessi sentire, stessi coperto," etc. (S. 7 on Amos; Lent 1496).

numerous and lengthy extracts are indeed to be found in Dr Luotto's somewhat bulky work, and in addition to these we have not shirked the task of reading through a very considerable proportion of Fra Girolamo's sermons in their entirety; but the prolixity of the preacher's style is such that our search for passages which might be here reproduced without the risk of wearying the English reader, has been, we regret to say, unrewarded. We shall, indeed, have occasion, later on, to pick out—as Villari and Casanova have done—stirring passages of a polemical or apologetic character, which compel attention either by virtue of their force of language, or by reason of their bearing on the events of Fra Girolamo's later years. But as regards his more pacific sermons, such as those on the First Epistle of S. John, preached in the Advent of 1491 or 1492, and the Lenten course of 1494, we must needs confine ourselves to a brief account of the topics on which he loved to dwell, and of the method which he followed in handling these topics.

Beyond all question the most striking feature of Savonarola's preaching is his constant use of the language of Holy Scripture, and of Scriptural allusions. His method is, professedly, that of continuous exposition of one or other book of the Bible, chapter by chapter and verse by verse; but to say this gives no idea of the extraordinary wealth of illustration whereby in his discourses the Old Testament is made to throw light on the New, and the New on the Old, and every book from Genesis to the Apocalypse on every other book.[1] The allegorical interpretation of the text is, indeed, habitually carried to excess; the etymological disquisitions in which he occasionally indulges are generally fanciful; his applications of the words of Holy Scripture are often strained and far-fetched. But with every allowance for such shortcomings, there can be no doubt that, as regards the use of Holy Scripture in the pulpit, preachers in our own day might learn—as Luotto has insisted at great length—a useful lesson from Fra Girolamo. Yet it must not be forgotten that precisely the same lesson is to be learned, and probably with greater profit, from the homilies of Origen, of S. Augustine, S. John Chrysostom, S. Leo, S. Peter Chrysologus, S. Gregory the Great—in a word, of the whole long line of the Fathers of the Church, Eastern and Western.

[1] We say that his method is "professedly" that of continuous exposition, because it very often happens that the continuity is so broken by lengthy digressions extending sometimes through several sermons, as to be almost lost sight of.

Another noteworthy feature of Savonarola's sermons, and one which *per se* is most worthy of imitation, is the use which he makes of the *Summa* of S. Thomas Aquinas. This is particularly conspicuous in the discourses delivered in the Lent of 1494, where very numerous references to the *Summa* may be found noted in the margin of the Venetian edition of 1536.[1]

Nevertheless, although these sermons are distinguished by many excellent qualities, we cannot follow Luotto when he would set up Savonarola as a model preacher. Besides the defects which have been already noted, whole series of his discourses are characterised by a certain artificiality and fancifulness of which it cannot even be said —according to the hackneyed phrase—that it is to be admired rather than imitated. To us at least it seems in no sense admirable, except so far as even a misplaced kind of ingenuity may demand the tribute of a qualified appreciation. We may take an example from the Lenten sermons of 1494, which have just been mentioned. Here we have a succession of nearly forty discourses "Super Arcam Noe" —on the building of Noah's Ark—the general plan of which is as follows. In view of the coming tribulations a vessel is to be built in which the faithful may take refuge from the Flood. The length of the Ark is interpreted as signifying faith, its breadth charity, its height hope. Accordingly, with very few exceptions, each of the discourses sets out from one or other of the three texts: "Walk while ye have the light" (John xii. 35); "Seek ye the Lord while He may yet be found" (Isa. lv. 6); and "Blessed is the man whose hope is the name of the Lord" (Ps. xxxix. 5). So far, good; for there is no reason why a most excellent course of sermons should not be preached on the three theological virtues, or why a single text, or two, or three should not do duty for the whole of such a

[1] They commence at f. 18. Presumably they are to be found in other editions also, but we can speak only of the one which lies before us. Of the sermons preached before 1491 we have only the preacher's rough drafts, in Latin, several of which Villari has published (vol. i. Append. pp. xii. *sqq.*, xxviii. *sqq.*). When Vivoli says of the Lenten Sermons of 1492 (he means 1494) "sono stampate latine, *benchè molto scorrette, che Dio perdoni a chi cosi stampar le fece*," he hardly goes beyond the admission which the editor himself makes in his Preface. It was not till 1495 (1494 stylo florentino) that Vivoli himself began to make his most valuable and very faithful reports, at first, as he says, "in sustanza più per un suo exercitio che per altro," but afterwards, "appunto *de verbo ad verbum*" (Villari, i. Append. pp. lix., lxi.). The very important series of sermons preached in the Autumn and Advent of 1494 were reported by Stefano da Codiponte (Villari, i. 227).

course. But this is not all. On each day the preacher undertakes to provide ten planks for the construction of the Ark, and it is here that the overstrained artificiality makes itself apparent. In some cases the ten planks are suitable enough for their purpose. They are ten points of dogmatic teaching concerning the attributes of God,[1] or concerning the Holy Trinity,[2] or ten motives for the love of poverty,[3] or ten salutary counsels for a time of tribulation,[4] or the like. But as Lent draws towards its close, the exigencies of this complicated design reduce the preacher to strange expedients. The planks make their appearance adorned with strange and mysterious devices, and inscribed with texts of Holy Scripture;[5] and one cannot help feeling that too large a place is here given to mere imagination, and that the truths which the preacher wishes to inculcate would come with greater force if they were urged with more simplicity. So, too, at the outset of each sermon, with a few exceptions, Satan is introduced as presenting himself, usually under some disguise, to trouble the preacher or his hearers with some objection or specious temptation. To such a quasi-parabolic method of introducing the answer to current popular fallacies no objection can be raised so long as the narrative is palpably and professedly fictitious. But so thin is the dividing line which separates these mere fictions from the closely analogous visions which Fra Girolamo was wont—more especially in subsequent years—to communicate to his hearers, that one cannot help suspecting that the assiduous culture of the imagination which these fictions bespeak may have been a predisposing cause which exposed him to the danger of illusion in the matter of his visions.[6] This, however, is a point on which we shall have more to say in the next chapter.

But when we turn from these defects—if defects they be—of form, of arrangement, of exegetical and imaginative setting, to the substance of Fra Girolamo's discourses, a careful examination of a sufficient number of them (for we do not profess to have read them

[1] *Sermones Super Arcam Noe* (Venice, 1536) ff. 22 *sqq.*

[2] *Ibid.*, ff. 59 *sqq.*

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 106-7. The motives are (1) Because our Lord said "Blessed are the poor"; (2) because He set the example of poverty; (3) because the Apostles set the same example; and so forth.

[4] *Ibid.*, ff. 114 *sqq.*, 119 *sqq.*

[5] *Ibid.*, ff. 128 *sqq.*

[6] Compare especially the long dialogue with "the Tempter" in the remarkable vision of 1st April 1495, which is recorded in the *Compendium Revelationum*, and summarised in the next chapter.

all), and of his ascetical works, affords, we gladly admit, far more satisfactory results. Indeed, it may safely be said that, when reduced to its simplest elements, Savonarola's ascetical system shows a somewhat remarkable similarity with that which is outlined, and in part developed, in the book of the *Spiritual Exercises*. With Fra Girolamo, as with S. Ignatius of Loyola, the first thing to be done, when men are to be brought back to the right path, is to get them to understand the end for which they exist, the purpose for which they have been created; to get them to recognise that as man has been created by God, so also he has been created for God; that as he comes from God, so also he goes to God, whether for the reward of eternal happiness (the attainment of his end), or for punishment (the penalty of having failed to attain it); that the full realisation of the purpose of creation is therefore not to be sought or found in this world but in the next; that, consequently, man's every serious effort ought to be directed towards the attainment of his eternal destiny; that a partial realisation of the purpose of our creation is possible in this life, but that it is to be found only in union with God by faith, hope, and charity; that such an union with God is, in its perfection, attainable by those alone who despise the riches, honours, and pleasures of this world. According to Fra Girolamo the dispositions which are requisite for the attainment of true happiness here below may be summed up in the one word "simplicity." Internal simplicity is purity of intention or singleness of aim; external simplicity is a resolute detachment of ourselves from whatever is "superfluous," or — as S. Ignatius would say — from those created things which instead of being regarded and used as necessary or helpful means whereby we may seek our true end, are perversely loved and clung to for their own sake, and so become hindrances instead of helps.[1] On

[1] *Cf.* the tract, *De Simplicitate Vitae Christianae* (especially book ii. c. 2), and the sermons on the First Epistle of S. John, *passim*. The same principles are likewise inculcated in the sermons "Super Arcam Noe"—especially in the earlier ones (*e.g.* ff. 52-54)—and elsewhere (*cf.* S. 2 on Amos). That the resemblance between Savonarola's teaching and that of the "Spiritual Exercises" is more than an accidental coincidence we dare not affirm; but there are several particular instances which suggest that S. Ignatius may have been acquainted with the writings of Fra Girolamo, and that he purposely guarded his own disciples against some of the mistakes into which the perusal of those writings might betray an incautious reader. The "simplicity" of Savonarola's ascetical system answers in great measure to the "indifferentia" of the Ignatian book.

this whole range of topics, on the unspeakable joy and unshaken stability of the soul which seeks and finds its peace in union with God, with God the source of all happiness, with God the eternal and immutable; on the danger of a disturbance of this peace if only a man allows himself to be distracted and drawn aside by any inordinate attachment to creatures—on topics such as these Savonarola is at his very best.

And yet even here a certain tendency to exaggeration, from which Fra Girolamo seems never to have been quite free, asserts itself. Among the external things which distract the mind from God he reckons ecclesiastical ceremonies, as they were carried out in his own time. It is, indeed, easy to understand his feelings on the subject. From his point of view, the pomp and pageantry of the age had invaded the sanctuary, and this to the grievous detriment of true interior piety. And it must certainly be admitted that the days in which Burchardus, the Master of Ceremonies to Alexander VI., systematised the rubrics of the Roman ritual, were days in which too many ecclesiastics compounded for their lack of true devotion by their solicitude for ceremonial splendour. There was only too much ground for regarding the ceremonialists as the Pharisees of their time; in his scheme of the division of Christians into three classes they were to be numbered among the "tepidi," men who professed to be religiously minded without being really so, who allowed themselves to be deceived, and deceived others, "sub specie boni," and who held a middle place between the "cattivi" or "tristi"—the open scoffers at virtue and religion—and the truly devout. Still, it is strange to read, in a sermon by an eminent Catholic preacher, that: "If any one should wish to bring back any people to the true way, *first of all the children must be withdrawn from all ecclesiastical ceremonies*." For although Fra Girolamo forthwith adds the proviso: "That is to say when they are being trained by those who have not the interior spirit," he goes on to recommend, as a practical measure, that they be withdrawn "at least from many functions"; and presently he says that he would like, if it were possible, to see "omnes indulgentie et cetera" done away with, whatever the "cetera" may be.[1] Elsewhere he urges that in the primitive Church an elaborate ceremonial had no place; and in one of his sermons he even goes so far as to say that, if human nature were

[1] *See* the rough draft of a sermon (1492 or 1493) published by Villari, i. Append. pp. xxxiv. *sqq.*

less imperfect, even sacraments would be superfluous.[1] It is not for us to condemn what the Church has not condemned, but some at least of these expressions of opinion appear to us to approach perilously near to the theological "note" of "rashness." It would have been wiser, perhaps, instead of lamenting the invasion of the sanctuary by ceremonial pomp and splendour, to rejoice rather that these things, as well as the arts, had been brought into the service of the Church; and it ought to have been possible to turn to good account a feature of contemporary ecclesiastical life which was at least not bad in itself, and which, with the fullest approval of Popes and saints, has after all survived Savonarola. And it is one of the ironies of life that the very man who was so ready to find fault with an elaborate ceremonial, as likely to distract the mind from God, was himself—as will presently appear—the contriver of functions the like of which had never been seen in Florence before, and which were, to say the least, less suited for perpetuation than those of which he spoke so slightingly.[2] So too it would, to say the least, have been wiser to abstain from somewhat contemptuous references to that form of devotion which shows itself in the desire to adorn and beautify the House of God.[3] In this matter, too, abuses are possible, and no doubt existed then in a greater degree than now. But Fra Girolamo speaks sometimes as if a thing which is liable to abuse were bad in itself.

But to return to more fundamental matters, Savonarola knew, as well as did S. Ignatius, that it was not enough to direct men's minds

[1] Sermons on the Psalms (28th May 1495).

[2] In the main, no doubt, Savonarola's views on the subject of ceremonial were sound. "Tiepidi, lasciate le vostre cerimonie," he says, "*nelle quali havete posto el vestro fine*" (S. 6 on Aggaeus; *cf.* S. 10). His fundamental principle is, that the end is to be steadily kept in view, and that it is a reversal of right order when what ought to be only a means to the end is made an end in itself, and thereby becomes a hindrance. (Elsewhere he has a passage about benefices, which are so often sought for as an end in themselves, instead of being regarded merely as a means to that one great end of God's service.) The principle is excellent; it is in the application of the principle that Fra Girolamo appears to go somewhat astray, or at least somewhat too far.

[3] In the Sermons *Super Arcam*, f. 137, the first plank represents two churches, "una cum tabernaculis paupercula, altera ornatissima," and it is plain that the poorer and less ornate building has the preference. And in another passage he speaks with scorn of those who go about asking ladies to give or to make altar-linen, cottas, vestments, etc., when they ought rather to provide for their families. What he says on the subject is not formally erroneous, but his words at least suggest a condemnation of what is in itself praiseworthy.

to their true end, and to disabuse them, intellectually, of the fallacies of worldliness, without also arousing in them a deep and abiding horror and detestation of sin. And here he was, if not in all respects at his best, at all events confessedly most forceful. The prevalent vices of the day, avarice, simony, usury, gambling, impurity, were lashed by him with a very fury of zeal which, in the space of a few years, changed the face of the city, and not merely reduced to a relative minimum the actual volume of vice, but in great measure compelled the vicious to hide away their wickedness, and at least to refrain from giving open scandal. Of Fra Girolamo's invectives against vice we shall have occasion to give some specimens hereafter; but, in the meanwhile, we would remark that even if it be admitted (as we think it must) that in this particular he exceeded the bounds of moderation, one motive at least which most powerfully influenced him, and which goes far to explain and even to justify his vehemence, was the overmastering desire to deliver the innocent and the frail, children and the gentler sex, servants and dependents and the poor, from the tyranny of evil example, of wicked fashions, of aggressive lust, and of oppressive greed and cruelty.

Nor was it merely the spiritual needs of men for which Fra Girolamo would make provision. The corporal works of mercy were, in his eyes, only less important than the spiritual, and his views on this subject must be allowed to have been eminently practical. The wars and political disturbances of the period had led to a great neglect of agriculture, and swarms of needy peasants flocked into Florence during the years of Savonarola's ministry in that city. It should never be forgotten that Savonarola set himself with all his immense energy to the work of providing for their necessities; not merely by urging again and again the duty of coming to their relief, but also by taking efficacious means for the collection and distribution of abundant alms.

Yet while he lays stress on the duty of paying a fair wage, of abstention from oppressive usury, and of almsgiving on the part of the rich, he also inculcates with the utmost earnestness and urgency the duty of labour and of patience on the part of the poor; and it is interesting to note how he insists that the best form of almsgiving is to provide employment for those who are capable of it.[1]

Nor must we pass over in silence the evidences of a deep and tender piety which are to be found in abundance in his discourses.

[1] Luotto, pp. 33 *sqq.*

It would have been to little purpose to discuss and expound, in the terms of scholastic philosophy and theology, drawn from the *Summa* of S. Thomas, the teaching of the Church concerning the adorable Sacrament of the Altar, unless the apprehension of this teaching had been made to subserve the ultimate end and purpose of exciting true devotion. The picture which Fra Girolamo draws of the preparation of a good Christian family for their Easter Communion is as beautiful as it is lifelike. The duty of confession and communion at this holy time is not to be treated as a purely personal matter which concerns the individual only, and to which as little reference as possible is to be made in ordinary domestic intercourse. Rather it is a duty which concerns the entire family as such, and is to be performed by all together. After all have attended the public offices of the Church on Holy Saturday, and have returned home betimes, the head of the household is recommended to assemble its members ("il messere e la madonna con i figliuoli intorno, e i servi e le serve") for the recitation of the penitential Psalms and the Litanies, and for a short meditation, before retiring to rest. They will do well to rise early, and to recite together the Office of Our Lady, and once more to spend some time in meditation, before proceeding to their parish church there to receive our Lord.[1]

Second only to his devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and to the Passion of our Lord (of which latter we cannot here speak in detail) was his filial veneration of the Virgin Mother of God.

"Tu sei certa speranza
Di tutti gli om mundani
Ch' in te non ha fidanza
Si vol volar senz' ali."

Thus, echoing Dante, he addresses her in one of his poems, and her praises occur again and again in his sermons. Dr Luotto gives a long and beautiful passage, in which certain passages from the Book of Wisdom, which are applied to Our Lady in the Liturgy, are made the vehicle of counsels addressed to different classes of the faithful. Mary is "a fruitful vine," therefore her sons should be "as grapes that are fused in one wine of charity." Mary is the "Mother of beautiful love," but not of the profane and sensual love of this world, therefore her daughters should adorn themselves in a manner that becomes modest women, not in such a way as to excite evil

[1] Luotto, pp. 45, 46.

passions. In Mary is "all hope of life and of truth," therefore let the little ones, who have life yet before them, look to her for example and for help.[1]

Of the immediate results of Fra Girolamo's preaching there is, as has been said, no manner of doubt. Enthusiastic admirers and deadly enemies, *Piagnoni* and *Arrabbiati*, are alike agreed that the face of the city was changed. Florence, writes Ghivizzano, the Mantuan envoy, has become like a monastery. The lascivious songs, called *Carnascialeschi*, which used to be heard on all sides at the time of the Carnival, and to the composition of which even Lorenzo de' Medici demeaned himself, gave place to pious canticles; and the gaudy pageants in which the gilded youth of Florence took delight were relinquished in favour of religious processions. The money which but for Fra Girolamo would have been squandered on finery and luxury, or which would have been lost at the gambling table—for the passion for high play was one of the moral plagues of the city, and had infected every class of society—now found its way to the friars' alms-boxes, and through them to the poor. All this it would be vain to deny, nor has it been called in question by those who have felt constrained to pass an unfavourable judgment on his prophecies, his political action, and his resistance to the lawful authority of the Pope. But even apart from these things, and others which have been already mentioned, there still remain several points in connection with his preaching on which widely divergent opinions have been expressed.

In the first place, it has been asserted with some emphasis by Dr Pastor, and has been implied even by so large-hearted a judge of men as Cardinal Newman, that the success of Fra Girolamo's preaching was ephemeral. After his tragic death, writes Newman, "things went on pretty much as before." "The religious enthusiasm which he had aroused, the moral renovation which he had effected," says Dr Pastor, "were transitory. They were like a fire which blazes up quickly, and quickly dies away."[2]

We are inclined to think that statements of this kind are apt to create a somewhat false impression. It is no doubt invariably the case that every great religious revival is followed by a certain reaction; and no missioner, unless he be very inexperienced indeed, expects that the fervour, which for the moment he may, with God's help, succeed in arousing, will be permanently maintained at the

[1] Luotto, pp. 56-58. [2] Pastor, iii. 154. *Cf.* Filipepi, pp. 490, 495 *sqq.*

same pitch. But he knows well that it is a great matter to stir men to a sense of sin, to excite them to acts of contrition and to deeds of penance, and to fill them even for the moment with some degree of enthusiasm in the good cause of their own salvation. He knows very well that many will fall back, some sooner, some later, into their old ways; but he also trusts that it will not be so with all; and he has a well-grounded confidence that zeal in the ministry of the word will surely bear some fruit, however modest the harvest may be when judged by a human standard. Whether the harvest be more or less abundant, whether the results of his apostolic labours be more or less enduring, will depend, under God, partly upon the purity of his motives, the self-abnegation with which his work is carried on, the fervour of prayer with which it is accompanied, but partly also upon natural or acquired gifts of eloquence, energy, sympathy, tact, and the like; and very largely on the prudence of his conduct and the appropriateness of his methods. Now we are entirely of opinion that if the work of Savonarola had been carried out with greater prudence, the ultimate results of his labours would have been more far-reaching and more permanent; more like those which were achieved by that other great preacher whose tercentenary has recently been celebrated, the Blessed Peter Canisius. But when we bear in mind the life-long impression made by the preaching of Savonarola upon men like the younger Pico della Mirandola, Girolamo Benivieni, Fra Benedetto da Firenze, Fra Placido Cinozzi, Simone Filipepi, and others of more or less distinction in the world of politics, literature, or art, we are forced to the conclusion that there must have been many hundreds of persons, of whom no record has been preserved, in whose souls that same preaching bore fruits that never entirely withered away and decayed.[1] For this reason we feel bound to enter a protest against any sweeping statement to the effect that the success of Savonarola's ministry was merely ephemeral. The harvest indeed was not so abundant, or of so hardy a growth, as under other circumstances it might have been; and the tares of spurious prophecy and visionary self-delusions, unconsciously sown by him, sprang up and fructified only too plentifully side by side with the wheat of sound doctrine and of Christian piety.[2] But while we fully recognise this, it is well that we should not close our

[1] Dr Pastor bears witness to the salutary influence exercised by Savonarola on some of the most eminent among the Florentine artists of the day (iii. 146-47).

[2] Pastor, v. 200 *sqq*.

eyes to the good grain which it pleased God to raise from the land that had been watered by the tears, watched over by the vigils, and cultivated by the unsparing labour of this too wayward and in many respects only too unskilful husbandman.

There is another charge which has been laid at the door of Fra Girolamo, by Dr Pastor among others, which seems to us to have been somewhat unduly pressed. It is that of an exaggerated asceticism, of a mischievous tendency to confound counsel with precept, and to impose, as if they were of strict obligation, practices which might seem to lie even beyond the sphere of prudent advice. In other words, Savonarola has been condemned as a rigorist, the Tertullian of his age.[1] Now that Fra Girolamo was prone to exaggeration is, we believe, incontestable, but the charge can, we venture to think, hardly be sustained in terms so extreme as these. In his development of this part of his subject, Dr Pastor has in the main, and to a great extent verbatim, followed Perrens; but when we come to inquire into the contemporary evidence on which Perrens here rests his case, it turns out to be somewhat slender.[2] The principal witness is Ghivizzano, whose letter to the Marquis of Mantua has been already mentioned. "This friar," he writes, "has so frightened the people [of Florence] that all have given themselves up to devotion. . . . He makes everybody ('tutta questa terra') fast three days a week on bread and water, and twice a week on bread and wine. He has made all the young maidens, and many of the married women, betake themselves to convents, so that one sees in Florence only servants and slaves and old crones."[3] Now these statements are so unequivocally definite that Dr Pastor may be pardoned for having taken them as setting forth the bare facts of the case and as affording ground for an unprejudiced judgment.[4] But we are inclined to think that he has by no means adequately

[1] "Essentially a rigorist of the type of Tertullian, to him due moderation was impossible" (Pastor, v. 203).

[2] On one point at least Dr Pastor (*Beurtheilung*, p. 58) has promised to modify his statements in a second edition of his work.

[3] "A fato fugire tute le donzelle e parte delle maritate in de monasteri per modo che non se vede per Fiorenza se non fante e schiavone e vecchiame" (Ghivizzano to Gonzaga, 17th November 1494; Cosci, p. 293; Pastor, v. 203; Luotto, p. 160).

[4] In fact Dr Pastor, in his reply to Dr Luotto, speaks of "des Zeugniss des *ganz objectiv urtheilenden* mantuanischen Gesandten über die von Savonarola masslos übertriebenen Fasten" (*Beurtheilung*, p. 52. Italics ours).

gauged the Italian diplomatist's capacity for what may charitably be described as hyperbole.

As regards the matter of fasting, so far as we can gather them from Fra Girolamo's own sermon the facts are these: Shortly after the beginning of November 1494, he exhorts his hearers to fast thrice a week till Advent, and on Fridays to fast on bread and water.[1] On 1st May 1495, he recommends them to fast on one day of the week, and to abstain from flesh meat on Wednesdays.[2] On 28th May (Ascension Day) of the same year he advises them to observe a "Lent" from the following day until Whitsun-Eve, *i.e.* on eight days in all, of which one was already a fast-day and four were days of abstinence.[3] The same recommendation he gives in 1496, and he urges that the Advent of that year be observed in the same manner as Lent is wont to be observed;[4] and, so far as we are aware, this is all. It is, of course, possible that we may have overlooked other instances of the same kind, and we do not undertake to deny that on the occasions which have been mentioned the preacher may have been somewhat exacting; but at least it must be admitted that such counsels fall far short of the more than Spartan code attributed to Fra Girolamo by the hostile and malicious pen of Ghivizzano. Moreover, on these occasions the Friar was careful to add that the fast was to be "discreet," and to be undertaken only by those whose health and duties permitted it.

Cappelli has brought to light a letter of Savonarola to one Ludovico Pittorio, who had consulted him about this very matter of fasting, and whose questions he answers in as large-minded a spirit of moderation as could have been expected from S. Philip Neri himself.[5] Indeed, it is in his private correspondence that Savonarola appears at his best.

The counsel which he frequently gave from the pulpit, with regard to richness of apparel and personal adornment, may seem to us in these democratic days a little minutious in its discrimination between the different classes and ranks of society; but the principles which he lays down on the subject are based upon the words of the two great Apostles, S. Peter and S. Paul (1 Pet. iii. 3; 1 Tim. ii.

[1] S. 3 on Aggaeus (November 1494).

[2] Sermons on the Psalms (1st May 1495).

[3] *Ibid.* (28th May).

[4] S. 19 on Ruth; S. 1 on Ezekiel; Luotto, pp. 174 *sqq.*

[5] Savonarola to Pittorio, 3rd August 1497 (Cappelli, *note* 118; Luotto, pp. 177-78).

9, 10), and he is careful to repeat again and again that he does not intend in this matter to impose or assert the existence of any strict obligation.[1]

Nor can he be justly charged with an exaggerated asceticism on the strength of his advice with regard to the frequentation of the Sacraments. "My children," he says, addressing the young, "do not any longer content yourselves with a yearly confession; I would have you confess more frequently; at least five times in the year." Again, he specially recommended confession and communion at the time of the Carnival, by way of precaution and protest against the wickedness of which this season was commonly made the occasion. Monthly or fortnightly confession is commended to those who wish to live devout lives.[2]

But the public spiritual ministry of Fra Girolamo was by no means confined to his utterances from the pulpit. If the reforms which he had at heart were to be effectively carried out there was need of organisation. An impressionable and vivacious people like the Florentines could not—as it seemed to him—be weaned from their pageants and festivities, which tended more and more to assume a character of scandalous licentiousness, by the purely negative method of repression; nor, on the other hand, could these same people be expected to invent a substitute for themselves. Accordingly, we find that one of the most remarkable features in his great work of reformation lay in the devising of religious celebrations which were to take the place of the unhallowed and often sinful diversions of the past. In so doing he was only carrying out the principle adopted by the Church in her peaceful warfare with paganism long centuries before;[3] a principle, too, which had been, and was to be, carried out in Christian Italy by many another devoted priest besides Fra Girolamo. We have already touched upon the point above, but it deserves more particular treatment here. "Had there been bonfires in the old time," the bonfires of the *capanucci* during the Carnival? "There was to be a bonfire now, consuming impurity from off the earth. Had there been symbolic processions? There were to be processions now, but the symbols were to be white robes, and red crosses, and olive wreaths—emblems of peace and innocent gladness—and the banners and images held aloft were to tell the triumphs of goodness. . . . As for the collections from street passengers"—made by means of *stili*, or rods

[1] Luotto, pp. 162, *sqq.* [2] Luotto, p. 38. [3] Luotto, p. 149.

with which the importunate solicitors of alms stopped the way—"they were to be greater than ever—not for gross and superfluous suppers, but for the benefit of the hungry and needy."[1] So writes the author of *Romola*, and indeed, it cannot be doubted that the processions organised by Fra Girolamo were in the nature of very solemn acts of public religious worship, well suited, in their main features, to the character of the people who took part in them. Possibly Dr Pastor, in dealing with this branch of the subject, has not sufficiently taken account of the wide gulf which separates the childlike enthusiasm of the people of Italy from the comparatively undemonstrative disposition of the Teutonic races.[2] At the same time, after making every allowance under this head, it would seem that Savonarola can hardly be exonerated from the charge of imprudence as regards some at least of the extra-liturgical functions which he set on foot. All the world has heard of the famous "pyramid of vanities," in which, on more than one occasion during his ministry, an immense collection of immoral books, lascivious pictures, masks, mirrors, "dead hair," cosmetics, cards, dice, daggers, all the apparatus of licentious gallantry, of extravagant play, of vindictive passion, were publicly consigned to the flames in a great holocaust of penitence. The act, taken by itself, was well conceived, and need cause no surprise. We read of such bonfires in the life of S. Bernardine of Siena half a century earlier,[3] and we read of them in the lives of other successful preachers in Italy down to a much later date. But some at least of the details of this and similar celebrations, as carried out under the directions of Fra Girolamo, are such that, when we read the description of them,

[1] *Romola*, ch. xlix. "Tenevano bastoni lungi in mano acciò che non passasseno se prima non pagavano qualche cosa," writes Somenzi, describing the proceedings. Del Lungo explains: "Era l'usanza delli *stili*, come chiamavano que' bastoni, co'quali sbaravano la via a' cortei delle spose novelle per averne di che far cene e baldorie. Il Frate accorto volgeva a bene li stromenti di corruzione per poi toglierli affatto. Anche i famosi *bruciamenti* potrebber credersi ispirati da que' *capanucci* carnevaleschi, intorno a cui i ragazzi ardevano stipa e fascine, ballandovi pazzamente d'intorno e giuocando a' sassi" (*A. S. I.*, N.S. xviii., ii. 9).

[2] Luotto reminds Dr Pastor (p. 143) that plenty of customs have survived in Italy down to comparatively recent times which would be deemed ridiculous in any northern country. In Florence itself, for several centuries, each newly-elected archbishop went through a symbolical ceremony of betrothal with the abbess of S. Pier Maggiore, this lady representing the Church of Florence.

[3] Luotto, p. 157.

given in all simplicity by his devoted follower Burlamacchi, it is difficult to repress a smile. We read of a solemn procession in which there walked more than five thousand boys,[1] many of them "in the form of beautiful angels," others carrying alms-boxes, followed by the religious of the different Orders, the secular clergy, and then the laity, men, women, and girls, all in their order. "So great was the fervour of that day that not children and women alone, but also men of station and position . . . laying aside all human respect, robed themselves in white garments like the children, and danced and sang before the 'Tabernacle' (*i.e.* the image of our Saviour, which was carried in the procession) like David before the ark . . . crying out loud with the children 'Viva Gesu Cristo, Re nostro!'" In this order the procession, after visiting S. Giovanni and the Duomo, returned at last to S. Marco, whence it had set forth. There all the Friars came forth from the convent, vested *in albis*, "each one wearing a garland on his head, and they formed in a great circle round the entire Piazza, dancing and singing Psalms."[2]

"Had there been dancing in a ring" (we quote again from *Romola*), "under the open sky of the piazza, to the sound of choral voices chanting loose songs? There was to be dancing in a ring now, but dancing of monks and laity in fraternal love and divine joy, and the music was to be the music of hymns." This, surely, was to carry the principle of adoption and adaptation, the principle of spoiling the Egyptians, a little too far. It may very well be that the dance, as Cosci has suggested, was little more than a processional march round, with steps keeping time to the music; but Friars wearing garlands on their heads must surely have trodden dangerously near to that proverbial precipice over which it is so easy to fall from the sublime to the laughable.[3] The procession above described took place in 1496; but in 1498 the programme was more highly developed. This time we read of three circles; an inner ring of novices each attended by a child "dressed as an angel,"

[1] Cinozzi, p. 10. The numbers are variously given by Landucci, Somenzi, and Burlamacchi. Cinozzi's estimate is moderate.

[2] "Tutti i Frati convennero usciti dal Convento senza cappa *in albis* con una ghirlanda in capo per uno, e fecero un ballo tondo grande quanto la piazza, cantando e salmeggiando innanzi" (Burlamacchi, p. 121).

[3] "Für die Lächerlichkeit solcher Mittel hatte Savonarola keinen Sinn" (Pastor, iii. 151). Did not Savonarola on this occasion simply transfer to the streets of Florence a piece of Fra Angelico's picture of the Last Judgment?

a second ring of students ("giovani del Convento") each with a lay youth for his companion, and a third and outer ring of priests and older religious, wearing garlands, and each accompanied by a grave citizen.[1] It can hardly be wondered at, that Florence became the laughing-stock of Italy, or that Fra Girolamo should himself have felt that he was taking a bold step. Speaking of one of his earlier processions he says: "I have for once made you all become as fools. It is not so? But it is not we who have done this, it is Christ. . . . Often have I preached to you against worldly wisdom, and now it seems that you yourselves wish to confound it by your actions. What will you say if one day I shall make you commit a yet greater folly? But it will not be my doing, it will be Christ's, that one day you shall even dance, in the piazza yonder, round the crucifix, the old as well as the young; and what will you say then?"[2] And he goes on to warn his hearers that although occasionally it is well to be foolish with a holy folly for Christ's sake, yet this is not to be done often. As a rule, gravity is to be observed, but the example of David is worthy of our imitation on occasion. Who does not see that the perfervid enthusiast is here allowing his better judgment to be dominated by his imaginative reminiscences of Old Testament scenes; and that he is at pains to justify the process by investing the workings of his over-excited fancy with a kind of divine halo? And who does not see that by such excesses he was preparing the way, as Dr Pastor points out, for a disastrous reaction?[3]

It would be difficult to speak too highly of the splendid work which Fra Girolamo, ably seconded by Fra Domenico Buonvicino da Pescia, carried out in reformation of the children and youth of Florence. Like S. Ignatius of Loyola, he wisely perceived that whatever hope there might be of the reform of society at large lay in the rising generation. And what he effected in this particular has been admirably set forth by Cinozzi.

"I must tell you [he writes] of the fruit which his teaching produced in the children, boys and girls, of the city. And first I will speak of the girls. You know that, speaking generally, it seems as though they have naturally no other inclination except to dress themselves showily, and

[1] Burlamacchi, p. 126.

[2] S. 42 on Amos, etc. (Luotto, pp. 139-40).

[3] "Er bedachte nicht . . . dass die Gewaltsamkeit seiner Bekehrungsmaschinerie eine Gegenbewegung hervorrufen musste" (Pastor, iii. 151).

to give themselves up to all manner of vicious vanity (di cose massime lascive e vane), and to spend wellnigh all their time in these things. But all this they put away under the influence of the Father's preaching. Not that they laid aside what was suitable to their state of life, or that they showed themselves wanting in good breeding; but they deprived themselves of all superfluities and of unbecoming costumes, saying to their mothers—and especially those of noble birth: 'Mother, whatever you would have spent on our adornment, give it to the poor of Jesus Christ.' And so, having given themselves entirely to our Lord, they lived in the greatest charity.

"But words fail me when I try to set forth the change, the wonderful, stupendous, and almost incredible conversion, of so many thousands of boys of every condition of life. What they were, how deeply plunged in every kind of vice, every one knows who has lived in this city. Their dress bespoke both pride and a shameless lack of modesty . . . so that Florence had become another Sodom, a thing horrible to think of; they were gamblers, blasphemers, and given up to every kind of vice. But under the influence of the Friar's preaching they became entirely changed, laid aside their vain and unbecoming modes of dress, desisted from the vices of which I have spoken, and became so fervent as to be an example to all Florence. In their faces there shone the radiance (uno splendor) of divine grace, so that by their means a great work was achieved."[1]

It would not of course be safe to take quite literally every word of this description, coming as it does from the pen of an enthusiastic admirer of Savonarola. But about the main facts of the case there can, we think, be no manner of doubt. And we may be quite sure that it has been reckoned to Fra Girolamo's account by the divine lover of children that he succeeded in winning over so many thousands of them, for a time at least, to a good and edifying life. And it would be ungenerous to blame him with any degree of severity for whatever element of excess or unwisdom it may be possible to discover in his efforts on their behalf. And yet if a biographer is not to be a mere panegyrist, he must needs take account of defects. It would therefore be a mistake to pass over in silence certain elements in Fra Girolamo's scheme of social regeneration which were, to say the least, of questionable prudence, and which, in our own days no less than in his, have been somewhat severely criticised.

[1] Cinozzi, p. 7. We have béen obliged to paraphrase one or two portions of this passage, and also to omit a portion of the writer's very plain-spoken description of the wickedness which had prevailed before Fra Girolamo came to the rescue of these victims of bad example and of evil influences, as well as of their own bad passions.

Cinozzi has told us that Savonarola not only reformed the children themselves, but also by means of them set on foot "extensive operations" ("si facevono operazioni grandissime"). With the help of Fra Domenico they were organised into a kind of spiritual militia, divided into companies corresponding to the several quarters of the city, each with its own *gonfaloniere* and staff of officers. The duties assigned to them were not merely the preservation of order, the securing of regular attendance at the church services, and the repression of abuses among themselves, but also the collection of alms for the poor, and in particular the levying of contributions for the bonfire of vanities.[1] The proceedings, as viewed from a purely naturalistic standpoint, have been vividly depicted by George Eliot. "The beardless inquisitors, organised into little regiments, doubtless took to their work very willingly. To coerce people by shame, or other spiritual pelting, to the giving up of things which it will probably vex them to part with, is a form of piety to which the boyish mind is most readily converted; and if some obstinately wicked men got enraged, and threatened the whip or the cudgel, this also was exciting." And again, after speaking of the procession as "a sight of beauty," she writes: "Doubtless, many of these young souls were laying up memories of hope and of awe that might save them from ever resting in a merely vulgar view of their work as men and citizens. There is no kind of conscious obedience that is not an advance on lawlessness, and these boys became the generation of men who fought greatly and endured greatly in the last struggle of their Republic."[2] And certainly, without taking this merely utilitarian view of religious ceremonies and religious organisation, we may commend the wisdom which enlisted the enthusiasm of the young folk of Florence, and drilled it to a holy purpose. But, unfortunately, the wisdom of Savonarola was not of that kind which knows where to draw the line in the employment of means for the attainment of an end excellent in itself; and, unfortunately, he did not confine his troops of young enthusiasts to the laudable work of collecting alms, and heaping up gewgaws in a bonfire. They might be usefully employed, he conceived, for the purpose of the much-needed repression of gambling. So widespread and so disastrous in its consequences had this passion become, that the intervention of the civil government seemed to be imperatively called for; nor can we

[1] Cinozzi, p. 9.

[2] *Romola*, ch. xlix.

be surprised that Fra Girolamo should have welcomed stringent legislation on the subject. And here we must needs pass over, with the briefest possible mention of it, a matter on which we should have liked to dwell at greater length. In estimating the character of Fra Girolamo's ministry, account must be taken of the sternness with which in his sermons he repeatedly called on the Signory to repress public vice, not gambling alone, but blasphemy also and scandalous immorality, by the infliction of the severest penalties.[1] Whatever may be thought of the wisdom or unwisdom of inflicting such penalties in an age very different from our own, it may at least be doubted whether it formed a part of the office of a Christian preacher to stir up the civil magistracy to this particular form of activity. But to return to the children. Fra Girolamo used the ascendency which he had gained over them, and the associations in which he had organised them, for the purpose of exercising through them a kind of inquisitorial surveillance over the households even of their own parents. And when we read that he encouraged children and servants to give information to the magistrates concerning domestic breaches of the law, we cannot be surprised that his action should have given offence; and there was at last some cause to fear lest he should give to the children themselves a false idea of their own position and importance which might, in the long run, be mischievous in its results.[2]

"I hear," said Fra Girolamo in one of his sermons, "that gambling goes on in the city. It is for you, my lords, to take measures that gambling be prohibited even in private houses. You, children, if you know of such cases, accuse the delinquents; but do not attempt to force an entrance into private houses, for I do not wish you to create a scandal."[3] And again: "The children have more zeal for the glory of God than you have. But opposition has been aroused against them by citizens, priests, and friars. . . .

[1] Pastor, *loc. cit.*; *Beurtheilung*, pp. 58 *sqq.*; Luotto, pp. 184 *sqq.*

[2] Fra Girolamo, in at least one of his sermons, called upon the Signory to pass a law whereby any slave who gave information against his master should be forthwith liberated if his accusation were proved true (Luotto, p. 203). That there should have been slaves at all in Italy in the fifteenth century was nothing short of a detestable and demoralising abuse, to the enormity of which Dr Pastor has done full justice (*History*, v. 126 *sqq.*). But it does not follow that Savonarola's proposal was a wise one; and possibly it was calculated rather to cause irritation, and to lead to the levying of blackmail, rather than materially to diminish the evil against which it was directed.

[3] S. 17 on Amos (Luotto, p. 186).

Why should they be hindered from doing good? These children are the scourge wherewith the Lord purges His temple—a scourge which makes its way through the whole city, overturning the tables of the money-changers, that is to say of the gamblers. To what a pass are we Christians come, that when any one seeks to do good, be he priest, or friar, or child, every one is down upon him?" Yet again he cries: "Children, go round and see how matters stand, for I hear that gambling has begun once more. The Board of Eight will give you permission to confiscate the cards of those whom you may find gambling. . . . Therefore, my children, go round and see that no gambling goes on."

And in fact Burlamacchi tells us how a deputation from the children waited on the Signory, and how one of their number made a set speech before them to this effect: "Magnificent and most excellent Lords! The Almighty God, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who of His goodness and clemency wishes to be in a special manner the King of this city, and His Mother, Mary, ever Virgin, our Queen, have delivered this city from bondage, and restored it to liberty, to the end that it might better reform itself. . . . And for this purpose they send us their prophets [*i.e.* Fra Girolamo and Fra Domenico da Pescia] to give us light and fervour of spirit through their holy preaching. Therefore, leaving aside our old evil customs and abominable vices, let us conform ourselves to a better mode of life. . . . As for us, we have completed our own scheme of reform, and have set it down in writing; wherefore we pray your lordships to confirm it by your authority, in order that we may the more courageously carry out our undertaking, and hunt down (*perseguitare*) the vices and horrible crimes which hitherto have prevailed in our city, planting in their stead holy virtues and good customs." No one of course supposes that the youthful spokesman expressed himself precisely in these words. But it is an admirer of Savonarola who gives us the substance at least of this unique oration. The reader may draw his own conclusions; our own impression is that these youngsters were in some danger of being trained up to a particularly odious form of Pharisaic pride. No wonder that many of the Florentine citizens, at least of the more worldly sort, were minded to send their children elsewhere, that they might be delivered from the domination of this extraordinary Friar. "Send them away whither you will," he cried, "you will see that they will return."

It is, however, only fair to Savonarola to add that, among the virtues for which his youthful apostles are said to have been conspicuous, was that of obedience to, and respect for, their parents and elders. No one, assuredly, would accuse the Friar of having consciously imbued them with anything resembling a spirit of insubordination or self-conceit; nor again would we be understood as suggesting that some little failing in this direction was an evil comparable with those from which he had delivered them. But the danger was there; and the measures and methods which created it appear to us to have at least fallen short of the perfection of apostolic prudence. S. Francis Xavier was, to say the least, as eager to avail himself of the ministry of children as Fra Girolamo Savonarola; but we take leave to doubt whether the system of youthful police and espionage which Fra Girolamo set on foot would have had his full approval.

CHAPTER IV

ON THE WATCH-TOWER OF ITALY: THE *COMPENDIUM REVELATIONUM*

SAVONAROLA, as has been seen, opened his career of preaching at Florence, in August 1490, with a series of denunciatory sermons. And although, in the following Lent, when he preached in the Duomo, he took for his subject "the Gospels," there could be no doubt that his mind was predominantly occupied with the thoughts and convictions which he had drawn from his study of the prophetical books of the Old and of the New Testament. So deep was his sense of the similarity of the circumstances of his own time with those of the decadence of the kingdom of Judah, that he conceived himself to have been specially inspired by God to warn his fellow-countrymen—not of Florence alone, but of all Italy—of the terrible chastisements which were about to fall upon them, and even believed that special revelations on the subject had been accorded to him. We say advisedly that he conceived himself to have been thus inspired and thus favoured with divine revelations, because—for reasons which we shall presently give—we cannot admit the probability that either the inspiration or the revelations were genuine. Nor is it without reason that we have determined to take account of this claim at a comparatively early stage of our review of his ministry at Florence. For it is no exaggeration to say that its assertion is the very keynote of his preaching. It is an enthusiastic admirer of Fra Girolamo, Father Ceslas Bayonne, who writes :—

"The mission to announce publicly the coming renovation of the Church, preceded by the chastisement of all Italy, this was the culminating point of the glorious apostolate of Girolamo; whoever does not study him under this aspect is incapable of estimating his true character, the unity of his life, the greatness and the beauty of the part which he was

providentially called to fill in the Church at the close of the fifteenth century."[1]

And Savonarola himself, who had hardly begun to speak in the character of an inspired prophet, when remonstrances on the subject were made to him by the partizans of Lorenzo de' Medici, tells us that he had determined to alter his method in some degree, but that he felt himself compe led by an irresistible power to persevere with his prophecies and the recital of his revelations.

"I remember [he says] that when I was preaching in the Duomo, in the year 1491, after I had composed my sermon for the second Sunday in Lent entirely on these visions, I determined to suppress it, and for the future to abstain from touching on these matters. But God is my witness that throughout the whole of Saturday and of the succeeding night as I lay awake, I could see no other course, no other doctrine. At daybreak, worn out and depressed by the many hours I had lain awake, while I was praying, I heard a voice that said to me: 'Fool that thou art, dost thou not see that it is God's will that thou shouldst keep to the same path?' The consequence of which was that on that same day I preached a terrible sermon."[2]

And he thus expresses his conception of the office imposed upon him by God Himself. "The Lord," he says, "has placed me here, and has said to me: 'I have placed thee as a watchman in the centre of Italy . . . that thou mayest hear My words and announce them' (Ezech. iii. 17) . . . The Lord says: 'If I show thee and tell thee that a sword is to come, announce the sword; if they will not be converted, thou wilt have obeyed, and shalt be safe. But if the sword come, and thou have not announced it, and they perish unwarned, I will require their blood at thy hands, and thou shalt bear the penalty.'"[3] Here assuredly is an uncompromising claim. It is not merely that he is to warn his hearers of those punishments with which God has threatened the sinner in the next world, or to remind them that in the ordinary course of God's providence the

[1] Bayonne, quoted by Luotto, p. 291.

[2] *Compendium Revelationum*, in Quétif, ii. pp. 227-28.

[3] S. 48 on Amos (Luotto, p. 260). It would have been well perhaps, if, instead of trusting to an imaginary mission, which had all Italy for its sphere of influence, he had paid attention to the prudent counsels of S. Antoninus, his predecessor (half a century earlier) in the office of Prior of S. Marco. "The mission to preach," he says in effect, "is one which comes indeed ultimately from God, but which must be communicated through the channel of lawful ecclesiastical authority, and must be confined to the place for which the commission is given" (*Summa Theologica*, part iii. tit. xviii. cpp. 1, 3).

broad road of criminal self-indulgence, of avarice and luxury and heartless oppression of the poor, all but infallibly leads to disaster in one shape or form; but these truths of faith and of reason are supplemented by a message which, like another Ezechiel, he, Girolamo Savonarola, has been personally commissioned to deliver from the vantage-ground of "the centre of Italy." It is a claim which is so forcibly obtruded upon our notice from the outside as almost to preclude a mere suspension of judgment. It is a claim which must be either allowed or disallowed.

We are not, indeed, shut up to the alternative proposed by Dr Luotto, viz. that Savonarola was either a true prophet, inspired by God, or a rank impostor.[1] There is a middle term lying between these two extremes; and that middle term is the very simple hypothesis that he was deluded, as so many men, before and since, have been deluded in the matter of visions and revelations.

Was then Savonarola really deluded, or are we to regard him as a true prophet? We have been admonished, by a learned admirer of Fra Girolamo, that this is a question which must be left to the judgment of the Church. And of course to the Church alone it belongs to pronounce an authoritative decision on such a matter; so that whatever is said on the subject must be said with the fullest submission to any such decision, if—which is not in the least to be expected—the Church should at any time undertake to settle the question. The fact, however, that the Church has not spoken authoritatively, but has been content to place on the index Savonarola's *Dyalogus de Veritate Prophetica*, with about a dozen of his sermons, assuredly does not stand in the way of an attempt to form a prudent judgment on a matter which is necessarily of interest to the student of ecclesiastical history.

Since, however, our purpose in this biography is not so much to enforce our own opinion as to provide the reader with such data as are necessary, and may perhaps be sufficient, to enable him to form an opinion of his own, it has seemed well to set forth here a rather full abstract of the *Compendium Revelationum*, a work in which Fra Girolamo undertook to give a complete account of the matter; to which we will append, in the form of footnotes, such further elucidations of his views or convictions on the subject as may be drawn from the *Dyalogus* above mentioned. From the nature of the case the two books in great measure cover the same ground.

[1] Pastor, *Beurtheilung*, p. 30.

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"Though I have [he writes] during a long period of time foretold, by divine inspiration, many future things, nevertheless, bearing in mind those words of our Saviour: 'Give not that which is holy to dogs,' I have always maintained a prudent reserve in regard of these matters (semper fui in dicendo parcior). Wherefore my 'conclusions' have been few, though the reasons wherewith I have urged their acceptance have been many. But I have never set forth the manner or the number of my visions; since the Holy Spirit did not inspire me to do this, nor did I think it necessary for the good of souls. But now I am led to set down in writing some of the chief predictions which I have publicly uttered, because my words have often been both misreported and misinterpreted. This, however, I will do compendiously, omitting details, except in the case of the vision with which I was favoured on the Octave of the Feast of the Annunciation (1495), and concerning which I then publicly preached.

"My reason for writing is that I neither can nor ought to endure that the mysteries of God should be held up to ridicule. I know, indeed, that even this book will be misunderstood by many, but I am confident that the pure and simple of heart will read it with profit.

"Before proceeding to a narrative of facts, I must first briefly declare the nature (modum) of prophetic revelation. He is rightly called a prophet who sees things which are beyond the scope of the knowledge which is natural to any creature; and in particular those future things (futura contingentia) which depend on the free will of man. To know these belongs to God alone, who may, however, reveal them to whom He will.

"Now, God in revealing such matters does two things. In the first place, He infuses a certain supernatural light, by means whereof the prophet perceives (*a*) that the things which are revealed to him are true, and (*b*) that they proceed from God. And so efficacious is this light, that it gives the prophet full certainty on the two points which have been mentioned, just as the light of reason makes the philosopher certain of his first principles, and makes the ordinary man certain that two and two make four.[1] Secondly, this supernatural illumination being presupposed,

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[1] On this prophetical "light," Savonarola discourses at considerable length in the second and third Books of the *Dyalogus*. When the eye sees colour, he argues, it cannot be deceived because colour is its "proper object." "If all mankind were with one voice to bear witness, saying that the lily is not white but black, still you would maintain that it is white." (S. Ignatius of Loyola, in the *Spiritual Exercises*, more shrewdly makes allowance for what we may call spiritual colour-blindness.) Now, as there is a physical light whereby we discern colours, and an intellectual light whereby we apprehend primary truths, and a supernatural light of faith whereby we assent to revealed mysteries, and the "light of glory," whereby the blessed see God face to face, so (intermediate between these two last) there is a prophetical light whereby he to whom it is given perceives the truth and the divine provenance of what it is given him to

God sets before the prophet that which He wishes him to know and foretell; and this in various ways, viz. either with or without a vision; or by means of a symbolical vision whereof the significance is made known to him, as in the case of Daniel (Dan. ii. 36); or by means of words which the prophet hears as uttered by various persons, which words—as well as the vision aforesaid—he knows to be formed by the ministry of angels."

The writer then proceeds to apply this to the matter in hand:—

"Almighty God [he says] seeing that the wickedness of Italy, and in particular that of her rulers, both ecclesiastical and secular, is increased beyond endurance (Italiæ peccata . . . multiplicari nec ea diutius ferre valens), has determined to purify (expiare) His Church by a terrible scourge. And since, as Amos the prophet says: 'God will do nothing which He has not revealed to His servants the prophets,' it is His will that for the sake of His elect this scourge should be foretold. *And whereas Florence is placed in the midst of Italy, like a heart in the midst of a man's body, He has deigned to make choice of her, to the intent that from her, as from a centre, this prophetic announcement should be spread abroad through all Italy*, as we see to be in fact the case.

"God, then, having among others made choice of me, His unworthy and unprofitable servant, for this purpose [of announcing the coming disasters] caused me to come to Florence, by order of my superiors, in the year 1489. In this year, on Sunday, 1st August, I began publicly to expound the Apocalypse in our church of S. Marco. And in the course of my preaching throughout that year I repeatedly (continuamente) insisted on three points [viz. the three which have been mentioned above, p. 15]. And these three conclusions I endeavoured to prove by means of probable arguments from Holy Scripture, and in particular by comparisons which I drew between what is there read and what is now actually happening.[1] But at this time I refrained from saying anything which would imply that I had received any special revelation on the subject, because I saw that my hearers were not rightly disposed for the reception of this secret. But in the years which followed, perceiving that

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know, in the manner described above. He then, as it were, touches and handles the truth, so that he can no more be deceived than a man can be deceived in thinking that he is awake and not merely dreaming. He admits (in book iv.) that this subjective test is directly and immediately valid for himself alone, and that other proofs are needed to convince others than himself; but he submits that his own testimony about his own conviction is not without weight, for those who have good reason to believe him to be a man of unimpeachable veracity and rectitude of intention.

[1] This seems to be a fair paraphrase of the words: "Ita vero tres conclusiones probabilibus argumentis et divinarum Scripturarum figuris, atque aliis similitudinibus seu parabolis ex his formatis quae modo in Ecclesia fiunt" (Quétif, ii. 226-27).

the minds of men were gradually becoming more ready to believe, I occasionally introduced some prophetic vision, which, however, I set forth merely in the form of a parable. But then when I saw how much opposition and ridicule arose on all sides, I began to grow afraid, and firmly determined to preach on other matters; but I was unable to carry out my resolve. For whatever else I read or thought about only moved me to disgust, and as often as I made an effort to preach on some other subject, I could never satisfy myself."[1]

Here follows the passage, quoted above, about the occasion on which he tried in vain to compose a sermon which should contain nothing about the visions.

Fra Girolamo concludes this part of the treatise by calling his hearers to witness how the Holy Scriptures, as expounded by him, have frequently exhibited a most remarkable congruity, or parallelism, with the actual course of events, and by briefly relating the action which he took in connection with the French invasion and with the reform of the Florentine constitution. Of these matters we shall have to speak in their proper place. For the present we pass on to the second portion of the *Compendium*, which is a verbatim report or reproduction of a sermon preached by Savonarola on 1st April 1495.

In this discourse, after speaking of the delay in the fulfilment of certain promises which he had made in God's name to the people of Florence, Fra Girolamo tells how he determined to go on an embassy to the Queen of Heaven on the festival of her Annunciation, to beg her intercession on behalf of his beloved city, and how, having done so, he received from her a favourable answer (*i.e.* to the effect that she would use her intercession) which he at once communicated to the people in a sermon delivered at S. Marco. Moreover, he had announced that on the octave day of the feast he was to be favoured with a fuller reply, in which it should be made known to him what had been the issue of her prayers on behalf of Florence.

Wherefore, he continues, on the night which preceded the octave day, being about to start upon his embassy, he considered with himself what companions he should take. Rhetoric and Philosophy offered themselves, but he would have none of them; and he finally chose Faith, Simplicity, Prayer, and Patience. Thus accompanied he set out upon his journey, but was soon met by the Tempter

[1] "Usque adeo deficiebam ut mihimet ipsi displicerem."

himself, in the guise of a hermit of the desert, who entered into conversation with him on the subject of his revelation and prediction. The conversation is reported in the form of a dialogue, of which we give the substance.

THE TEMPTER.—Although I dwell in solitude, yet, by means of a special revelation, I have learned the good results of your preaching, and also that you are animated by a good intention. But it has also been made known to me that you are misguided by a certain simplicity. For in order to draw the people from vice to virtue you have predicted various tribulations. But this is not lawful; for God, who is the Truth, wishes His preachers to be entirely truthful.

SAVONAROLA.—I am not so ignorant as to be unaware that God loves the truth, and that it would be a grievous sin to utter a lie in the pulpit.[1] And to say that by means of a lie I have wrought good results is to say what is self-contradictory. For the results (fructus) themselves show that I have not lied. Nay, I have often publicly called God to witness, and I do so now, that if ever I have uttered a deceptive statement, *I would that He should blot me out of the Book of Life.*

T.—Well, then, if you are not a deceiver, at least many think that you are moved by a certain spirit of melancholy, or that these visions are but dreams, or the effect of a lively imagination.

S.—So far from being melancholy, I am filled with a great joy, and I experience an illumination and behold visions which are beyond nature. *For I have studied philosophy, and I know how far the natural light of reason can go.* I know that those things which are made known to me are beyond its scope, and especially what are called *futura contingentia.* Moreover, I cannot but recognise the entire conformity between the present state of affairs and these expositions of Holy Scripture which, without any straining of the text, I have publicly given.[2] But these things, as even a dullard must be aware, cannot arise from a melancholy temperament, or from dreams, or from a strong imagination.

T.—Then it is the effect of some conjunction of stars at your birth. etc.

S.—This is a foolish objection, and astrology is mere folly.

T.—Well, then, these things may happen by the power of the devil.

S.—I have read the Bible, and the lives and writings (doctrinas) of the saints from beginning to end; and therefore I know sufficiently all the marks whereby diabolical visions may be distinguished from those which are divine. But experience also shows how greatly they differ;

[1] Similarly in the *Dyalogus* (book i.): "Non sunt facienda mala ut eveniant bona."

[2] In the *Dyalogus* he alleges, among other confirmatory proofs, that the principles of his prophetical interpretation of Holy Scripture have become so familiar to his hearers that even unlearned women can tell beforehand how he is going to turn a passage. "Nam vel ipsae mulieres cum primum Evangelia vel alias S. canonis lectiones pronuntiamus, antequam a nobis declarentur ex iis quae apparent statim quod in eis declarandis consilium nobis futurum sit ipsae antea praesentiunt."

(1) because the things which I have foretold are much more certain for me than their first principles for the philosophers ; (2) because I see that what I have foretold is exactly coming to pass, and I have never been deceived even in the smallest detail. Again, the devil is an enemy of virtue ; and it is not to be thought that he would be content to see such excellent results produced without either ceasing from his alleged guidance, or at least drawing me into some mistake which would destroy my credit.[1] Again, in the city of Florence all, or nearly all, the men of good life adhere to my teaching, while the openly wicked attack both it and me. Yet, notwithstanding their opposition, this teaching of mine continues to advance and prosper, so that the number of our disciples constantly increases, while that of our opponents grows less ; and our work gathers strength, while the efforts of our adversaries grow weaker and are coming to naught (penitus corruere).[2]

T.—Say what you like : for my part I cannot believe that our Lord has ever spoken to any one since His ascension.

S.—On the contrary, it is related that He has spoken to many since then : first of all to S. Paul ; then again to S. Francis, and to many other saints. Moreover, Christ died for sinners, and allows Himself to be handled by sinners in His holy Sacrament, is it then to be wondered at that He should speak to a sinner?[3] But men are so blind that they pronounce that to be impossible which to God is easy.

T.—I admit that this was possible in former times, but not in our days, when there are plenty of other means of instruction.

S.—These other means are sufficient for external instruction. But this is to little purpose unless men also have the internal light of grace. But over and above this ordinary supernatural light, there is often need of a more special illumination, particularly in the case of those who must enlighten others, and the more so when circumstances are such as to make it very difficult to judge what is best to be done. All the volumes of Scripture and the doctors do not provide for every individual case. But, again, there is a quite special reason for a revelation at the present time. For since a renovation (mutatio) of the entire Church does not usually take place without being preceded by grievous tribulations, spiritual and corporal, it is necessary that under such circumstances the elect of God should be prepared and strengthened. And therefore God, foreseeing such a renovation, warns His people, comforts and consoles them, through the mouths of His prophets. (Here Amos iii. 7 is again quoted.)

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[1] The mistake might be, not one which would destroy Fra Girolamo's credit, but one which would endanger the peace of the Church.

[2] It would seem as if when these words were written Fra Girolamo looked on external success as a guarantee of divine favour. We are not alone in thinking that he was deceived by the apparent loyalty of the Palleschi or Bigi, of whom more anon. It certainly could not be said that the number of Savonarola's disciples continued to increase to the end.

[3] Similarly in the *Dyalogus*, book i.

T.—But did not our Lord say: "It is not for you to know the times and the moments"?

S.—If you will look more closely at the text you will see that this is not said of all "times and moments," but of those times and moments "which the Father has kept within His own power"; as, for instance, the day of Judgment. But as for other times and moments, that of the deluge was made known to Noe, to Jeremiah the seventy years of captivity, to Daniel the seventy weeks, etc.

T.—But why has God chosen *you* rather than so many others?

S.—Why did He choose S. Peter? It is not for men to criticise the acts of God.

T.—Are you then holier than others?

S.—These gratuitous gifts (gratiae gratis datae) are given principally for the benefit of others. And did not God inspire Balaam?

T.—I hear that you have got your prophecies from certain foolish women.

S.—Every one knows that I rarely speak with women. It is not to be supposed that I should place such trust in them as to dare to affirm with certainty what I had learned only from such a source. By so doing I should expose the faith to danger and myself to shame, in the event of some prediction failing.

T.—It is said that you enjoy the friendship of princes, and that your knowledge of their plans enables you to prophesy.

S.—It would be folly to trust in the changeable dispositions of princes. Even their lives are not secure. To know with infallible certainty what is about to happen to them, or through them, is beyond the scope of the intelleet even of an angel.

T.—They say that you converse with the politicians of the city, and thus come to know the intentions of foreign princes.

S.—The objection does not deserve an answer. Common-sense teaches that no certain knowledge is to be had by such means.

T.—They say that by means of your remarkable cunning (summa astutia), and your intimate knowledge of constitutional politics, you have excogitated these predictions, which you have then so craftily expressed, that, in the event of their non-fulfilment, you might always be able to devise some way out of the difficulty (excusationis latibula).

S.—It is now five years since I began to predict these things which have happened just as I foretold. Then they said I was a simpleton, but, now that the event has shown that I was right, they turn round and ascribe it all to my astuteness, and say, moreover, that I did not speak plainly.[1] But I spoke very plainly about the French invasion, and I

[1] There is a curious passage in the *Dyalogus* in which Savonarola declares that under the influence of the prophetic light he has made progress, not only in religious knowledge, but also in philosophy, mental and moral, *and in political and economical science:* "in economicae et politicae peritia, quarum rerum olim penitus expers eram" (book iv.).

hope that many further details will hereafter be revealed to me, which I shall set forth with equal plainness.

T.—I am told that you draw your prophecies from the writings of S. Brigit and Abbot Joachim.

S.—I assure you that I have never found any pleasure in reading such things. My brethren can testify that all my delight is in the Holy Scriptures, in comparison with which everything else seems insipid. The revelation of S. Brigit I have never read, and little or nothing (rara admodum aut nulla) of those of Abbot Joachim. And if you do not believe this, at least do not impute to me such folly as it would be to assert with so much confidence the truth of my predictions if I had no better foundation than this. But the strongest argument in my favour, and one which ought alone to be sufficient, is that sinners have been converted by my preaching.[1] It matters not to me whether the truths which I preach are or are not based on the prophecies of others, provided only that men are converted. I have no desire to be regarded as a prophet, for this is a name which carries a heavy burden of danger. But in fact I have read no other prophecies except those of the Bible; and if, perchance, at the persuasion of friends, I have glanced at one or another, I have laid them aside after a hasty perusal, neither condemning nor approving them, but leaving them to the judgment of God.

T.—These alleged revelations of yours ought to have been kept secret, for so the Fathers teach.

S.—Then Moses, Isaiah, and the rest ought to have been silent, and so, too, S. Benedict, S. Vincent, S. Catherine of Siena, S. Brigit, and a host of other saints. Of course, such things are not to be spoken of unless God should so command, or the good of our neighbour (deo pariter monente) should require it. Every one knows that I speak of these things only in public. In private I never speak of them except under seal of secret to some familiar friend. Believe me, I keep many things locked up in my own breast, which I have never made known, and never will make known, unless God should otherwise inspire me.

T.—Whoever predicts future things should confirm the truth of his predictions by miracles. [An argument is here added from a text of the Decretals, c. *Cum ex injuncto*, *Extrav. de haereticis*, which with its answer need not be here reproduced.]

S.—This is not true. Few of the prophets worked miracles. The case of Jeremiah, who was accused of being a false prophet, was to be determined, not by miracles, but by the event. Moreover, it is unnecessary that I should prove my mission by miracles, for I have never maintained that I have been sent by God alone, and not by my superiors.

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[1] Besides the general argument from results, Savonarola, in the *Dyalogus* (book v.) urges the particular instance of the Community of S. Marco. The brethren, he says, are two hundred and fifty in number, most of them of position and education. They believe the prophecies. Is it conceivable that God should have allowed them to be deceived?

For every one knows that I was appointed by them to the office of preaching. Nor can I be called a heretic. [This is an allusion to the text of the Decretals mentioned above.] For I have taught no dogma contrary to the Christian Faith, and I have always submitted, and do now submit, my teaching to the judgment of the Holy Roman Church.

T.—In a word, I don't like to believe in a hurry. For it is written: "He who is quick to believe is fickle of heart."

S.—On the other hand, it is written: "Charity believeth all things." Both are utterances of the Holy Spirit, and they show that a distinction must be drawn. Some things we ought to be slow to believe, *e.g.* detractions and whatever is against our neighbour's character. But we ought to be prompt and ready in giving credence to whatever promotes a virtuous life. S. Ambrose, S. Augustin, S. Jerome, S. Gregory, and other holy Fathers were prompt to believe even what was told them by ignorant persons, provided they were of good life.

T.—If we are to believe all such visions, we shall certainly be deceived. Therefore it is written: "Prove the spirits whether they be of God."

S.—Herein lies a secret which not every one can comprehend. The light of faith is a supernatural endowment (forma) which is specifically the same in all who have it. Now this light has a natural affinity for the truth as for its proper object. *Therefore no one who is endowed* (informatus) *with this light can firmly adhere to any error which is contrary to the faith.* But as often as a sincere and faithful man hears something which is beyond the reach of his intellect, it is impossible that, if he acts in conformity with this light, he should give a firm assent to what is false; but he always leaves it to the judgment of God and the Church. *Moreover, those who live well and act sincerely* (recte ad Deum ambulant) *have a special illumination*, by reason of the intimate bond of union between charity on the one hand, and faith and simplicity on the other;[1] as it is written: "Exortum est in tenebris lumen rectis corde." *And by virtue of this illumination they are inclined to discern, without fail, divine revelations and operations.* And so it is that in these matters the good have not been deceived, but the wicked have.

T.—But I observe that the wisest and shrewdest of men hold these revelations in contempt.

S.—It is not a question of human wisdom, but of a good life. God chooses the foolish things of this world to confound the wise.

T.—Those who believe these things are few in number by comparison with those who hold them in derision.

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[1] "Propter conjunctionem caritatis cum fide et mentis rectitudine et simplicitate." This seems to be the true reading, as given in the edition of 1495. But *cf.* Quétif, p. 261. Similarly in the *Dyalogus* (book i.) he argues that, since faith always inclines a man to believe what is true, therefore no man can, *stante habitu fidei*, pertinaciously contradict a divinely-inspired prophecy or the like. It is on this ground that he has said of those who obstinately oppose him that they have not the faith, are no true Christians, and the like.

S.—The argument is frivolous. The truly wise are few, but the number of fools is infinite. But again you must distinguish between those who have actually heard the preaching themselves, and those who have only heard about it from others. *Among the actual hearers an overwhelming majority are also believers, in fact, there is hardly one among my hearers who does not also believe.* But among those who have not heard me, I admit that those who do not believe are in the majority. For it is one thing to hear a man speak who inwardly feels these things, and to experience the fire (impetum) of the living voice, and to feel the force of the preacher's words, and to perceive the order and method of his reasoning, and its conformity with Holy Scripture, and quite another thing to hear the cold and dry recital of the same truths by another who does not inwardly feel them, and from whom they come in a pointless succession of words, without life or spirit.

T.—Many say that you have predicted things which have not come to pass.

S.—Whatever I have predicted has either already happened, or will most certainly happen, nor will a single jot of it be unfulfilled. Of course, in private conversation, I may have made mistakes like any other man. Therefore in the pulpit I have warned my hearers to place no more reliance on my private utterances than on those of any one else. Moreover, the prophetic spirit is not always with me, but, as with other prophets, so with me it comes and goes. Nor does God reveal everything, but more or less, according to His will. It is foolish to object that I cannot read the secrets of hearts, for this I do not pretend to do. But whatever I say in the pulpit has first been sedulously weighed in the balance of prayer, and tested by comparison with the sacred test and with natural reason.

T.—But surely it would be much better for you to be silent, for your name is a byword in Florence and throughout Italy.

S.—My endeavour is to please God, not men. All who preach such things are regarded as foolish by the wise of the world.

T.—If you only made yourself ridiculous it would not so much matter, but you expose yourself to danger.

S.—I know very well what the prophets and Apostles have suffered, and I know the blessing pronounced on those who are persecuted for Christ's sake.

T.—I see that you have an answer ready for every objection. But some are of opinion that you deliberately deceive the people in order to gain honour, and glory, and riches.

S.—Though it is not for me to justify myself out of my own mouth, yet, for the sake of the doctrine of Christ, I will answer with what modesty I may. I confess myself to be a sinner, and in need of God's mercy. But remember that to God alone it belongs to see into the heart of man. Those who speak as you report do so without foundation, for, on the one hand, they cannot read my conscience, and on the other hand, they have no external sign by which to substantiate such a

judgment. For assuredly I have not gained the things which they suppose me to seek.

The objections of the Tempter which follow next in order concern the affair of the separation of S. Marco from the Lombard Congregation of the Order of Preachers, and the political activity of Savonarola, with which topics we shall have to deal in future chapters. We therefore omit them here, and reproduce only the last of this long series.

T.—At any rate, I think you might preach about virtue and vice, and leave prophecy alone.

S.—My answer is, that causes are known from their effects. The result shows that the prophecies have, in fact, helped the cause of moral reform.

At this point the companions of Fra Girolamo are observed by him to be smiling and conversing together, and on being asked: "Qui sunt sermones quos confertis ad invicem et estis laetae?" they made known to him with whom he is talking.

The rest of the book is taken up with his experience in the court of heaven, when the doors had been opened. Into the details of this description, Dantesque in its minuteness, we need not enter, but we give in substance the reply of the Blessed Virgin Mary to his embassage.

"O city of Florence [she said], beloved of our Lord Jesus Christ my Son, and of myself, hold fast to your faith; persevere in prayer; be strengthened in patience. For by these means you will attain to eternal salvation, and will gain glory among men."

Having said this much she fixed her eyes on me and was silent. But I, with great confidence, replied:

"These, O Virgin Mother, are words of general import: but thou must needs dispense thy goodness with a more liberal hand."

Then she addressed me in the vernacular with such propriety and elegance of speech (adeo acommodate et eleganter) that I was astonished.

"This is the answer which you must give to my beloved people. It is true that they are sinners, and that by their wickedness they have deserved all manner of evils, *especially by reason of so many who will not believe what for some years past you have predicted:* and this notwithstanding that my Son has granted so many signs as to leave them without excuse. For although faith is a gift of God, nevertheless, but for their perversity and insincerity, they could have received such light from my Son as would have enabled them to believe all without difficulty. Warn them, therefore, to lay aside their hardness of heart, lest in the time to come God should be angry with them, whereas, heretofore, in

spite of their demerits, He has had regard to the prayers of the blessed in heaven, and of the just on earth, *and has committed all power to me.*[1]

"For the city of Florence shall become more glorious, more powerful, and more wealthy than it has ever been, and shall extend its borders more widely than ever, beyond all the expectations of many. Whatever she has lost [*e.g.* Pisa], and whatever she may yet lose, shall be restored to her, together with fresh acquisitions. *But woe to her rebellious subjects, for they shall be severely punished.* And it is now four years since, among other things which you have predicted, it was foretold to the Pisans that, in the time of your tribulation, they would seek to regain their freedom, and that this would be the cause of their ruin, which will certainly come to pass."

Hereupon Fra Girolamo asks whether Florence will be afflicted with tribulations "before the consolations." Mary replies:—

"You have predicted the renovation of the Church, which will certainly take place, and that quickly. You have also, under the illuminating guidance of the Holy Spirit, foretold that the conversion of the infidels, *i.e.* of the Turks, the Moors, and others, will shortly take place, so that many who are now alive will see it. Now this renovation and extension of the Church cannot take place, as you have declared, without many previous tribulations. Therefore let it not seem strange if Florence, too, should have her share in these troubles; but she shall suffer less than the rest."

Herewith she gave my angel a great globe wherein the whole of Italy was contained. This my angel opened, and forthwith I saw Italy disturbed, and many great cities therein distressed by immense tribulations, which I am forbidden to disclose. I saw the city of Florence likewise disturbed, but much less than the rest. Then the Blessed Virgin gave me a smaller globe, whereon was inscribed, in Latin, that first and briefer response which has been given above. But on opening the globe I saw the city all aflower with lilies, which also extended on every side beyond the city walls. Whereupon I joyfully exclaimed: "O Lady, it seems that these lilies match well with those greater lilies [*i.e.* the fleur-de-lys of France] which have recently begun to extend their shoots." *To this she made no answer*, but observed that if the neighbours of Florence, who rejoice in her troubles, knew what evils were to fall upon them, they would rather bewail their own dangers than be elated at the tribulations which others suffer.

Then I asked her what reply I was to make if I were asked whether these promises were absolute or conditional. She answered: "*These things are granted absolutely* (*i.e.* without condition), for God will make

[1] "Propter crebras orationes beatorum . . . et justorum . . . omnem mihi contulit potestatem" (p. 356).

use of every means (omnia media procurabit atque producet) whereby these graces may be brought to their destined issue. Wherefore do thou assure the incredulous that not a jot or a tittle shall pass away, but all shall be as has been said. Let the wicked then do all the evil they can, they will not be able to hinder these benefits, wherein, however, they shall themselves have no share. As for the good, they shall be afflicted with less or greater severity, according to their conduct, and in particular according as they show themselves exact or remiss in administering the laws against blasphemers, gamblers, the corrupters of youth, and other criminals."

"But [he asks] what am I to say if the question is put to me: 'When shall these things be?'" She replied: "*Cito et velociter:* Soon and speedily. But as when you first began to predict that these things would happen 'soon and speedily' you used to add: 'I do not say that they will happen within one, or two, or four, or eight years,' without however mentioning a longer interval than ten years, and yet the scourge came sooner than was expected; so now you must say 'soon and speedily,' without determining any limit of time, and perchance these things, too, will come to pass sooner than is thought."

"With these words," says Fra Girolamo, "I was dismissed." Finally, after a passage concerning the French invasion, he reminds his hearers that although the promises made to the city are absolute and irrevocable (quamvis haec *absolute et irrevocabiliter* universae civitati promissa sunt), yet they are not made to each citizen individually. But if any one will take note of the names of the believers and the incredulous, he will find that the latter will have to suffer, by comparison with the former, a sevenfold share of disaster. Many, he admits, will laugh at the details of this vision; but let them read Ezekiel and Daniel and Zachariah, in whose visions they will find plenty of mysterious details. Nor are all the circumstances of the visions of the prophets set down in Holy Writ. But this vision he has felt compelled to describe in detail. Not even the Gospels, and the teaching of Christ Himself, escaped contradiction.

The reader has now before him a tolerably full if not a tediously circumstantial summary of Savonarola's own vindication of his claim to be regarded as a true prophet. Once more, then, we ask ourselves, was he deluded? And we proceed to give our reasons for thinking that he was.[1]

[1] The question is discussed at considerable length by Prof. Schnitzer in the *Historisch-politische Blätter*, 1898, pp. 562 *sqq*. He does not venture to decide it, but seems, on the whole, favourable to Savonarola's claim. So far as we can

In the first place, without denying that the gift of prophecy, like that of miracles, may be, and has been, communicated by God under the New Testament no less than under the Old, we assert, without fear of contradiction, that prophecy does not play the same prominent part under the Christian dispensation as it did under the Old Law, and that in any individual case the *primâ facie* presumption is against the genuineness of an alleged private revelation, or vision, or prophecy, rather than in its favour. For experience shows that these are matters wherein men are peculiarly liable to delusion; and the very least that can be said is, that when a man openly lays claim to the prophetic gift the burden of proof lies upon him, and not upon those who deem it the wisest course to suspend their judgment, and to await the event. And when, after the ultimate issue has been awaited, it is found that the event is at least not openly and palpably in favour of the claim, the adverse presumption gathers strength. Now this appears to us to be plainly and obviously the case with Savonarola. No one can pretend that a sufficient interval of time has not elapsed since the death of Fra Girolamo, whose fourth centenary was celebrated only last year, to allow of a calm and reasonable judgment being passed upon his alleged prophetic gifts; yet who can say that the verdict of prudent men, even of those who joined together in May 1898 to celebrate his memory, is unanimously favourable to him in this particular point? And yet, if the claim were clearly and plainly valid, a practically unanimous verdict is, as it seems to us, what we have a right to expect before admitting the claim. This consideration, however, does not after all carry us further than a *primâ facie* presumption; and we must look for some more definite indications of truth or of error.

see, he does not suggest any point in its favour which we have overlooked. He lays, however, particular stress on the predictions concerning the King of France which so deeply impressed Philipe de Comines ("Mais touchant le Roy et les maulx qu' il dict luy debvoir advenir, luy est advenu ce que vous voyez; qui fut, premier, la mort de son fils, puy la sienne, et ay veu des lettres qu' il scripvoit au dict Signeur"), and on the astounding calumny of the Friar's enemies that he made use of knowledge gained in the confessional. "Habuit," says Burchardus (*Diarium*, Ed. Thuasne, ii. 462), "intelligentiam cum pluribus ex patribus in civitate Florentiae et extra eum . . . residentibus, qui ei confessiones Christi fidelium revelarent cum confitentium nominibus et cognominibus" (!) But a charge based on the merest gossip, as idle as it was cruel, deserves—as it seems to us—no serious attention, except as an evidence of the lengths to which malice could go.

We turn then, in the next place, to the tests by which Savonarola was content to try his own predictions. These are:—

(*a*) His own subjective certainty.
(*b*) The fulfilment of so many of his predictions.
(*c*) The admirable results produced by his prophetic utterances.
(*d*) The alleged fact that they were accepted by the good and rejected by the wicked.[1]

Now, as regards the test of subjective certainty, Fra Girolamo in his *Dyalogus* makes one of his interlocutors object that this kind of certainty could by the nature of the case be valid only for himself. And indeed he allows the force of the objection, and admits that, as far as other men are concerned, his own certainty does not of itself constitute an adequate reason for their assent.[2] Nevertheless, it may be argued, when a man, whose veracity and integrity of purpose are beyond reasonable suspicion, assures us that he is infallibly assured of some truth which he alone can know (in this case the fact of a revelation made to himself), his testimony deservedly carries considerable weight as creating a presumption in his favour.[3] And this must of course be admitted in regard of all such subjective experiences as are not of their very nature apt to be illusory. But here again Fra Girolamo has anticipated the implied exception. Eliphaz (in the Dialogue) reminds him that many men have been persuaded of the truth of their revelation and yet have been deceived. To this he can only reply that if they had more carefully and conscientiously examined their experiences, they would have discovered their mistake;[4] adding, however, that in his case the reluctance with which he embarked upon this perilous sea, the earnestness with which he has prayed for light, and other like circumstances known to those who really knew him, are all in the nature of cumulative evidence tending to establish, even for others,

[1] It is unnecessary to multiply references to the sermons in which the same arguments are used.

[2] *Dyalogus*, book v.

[3] "The arguments which I have used," he says in effect, "are valid for those 'penes quos non sum de mendacio suspectus'" (book iv.). Writing from notes on the *Dyalogus*, taken some months ago at the British Museum, we cannot be sure how far Savonarola has explicitly developed the argument suggested above.

[4] "Mihi crede, si hujusmodi somniantes certo examine sua librassent, lumine naturali rationis et supernaturali lumine fidei ea conferendo, non utique falsi (*i.e.* decepti) essent: nec dubia pro certis affirmassent" (book iii.).

a strong presumption that he has not been deceived.[1] On some of these points we shall have occasion to touch presently. For the present we must be content to record our conviction that the vehemence with which Fra Girolamo insisted on his own infallible certainty is alone sufficient to arouse a well-founded suspicion.[2] "The revelations of one who does not show positive signs of a consistent humility," says Gerson, "or whose actions are not in accord with his protestations of humility, are not to be accepted as genuine."[3] Now the knowledge that such exceptional experiences are too often attended with delusion, ought, it might seem, to keep one who is truly humble from an over-weening confidence in his own immunity from such deception; and Savonarola's calm assurance that he is familiar with all the subjective tests of such phenomena, serves only to remind us how limited is the range of psychological knowledge, and how unconscious Fra Girolamo appears to have been of these limitations. Nor was it merely that he professed the most absolute certainty concerning a matter in which the possibility of delusion ought perhaps to have been more constantly kept in mind. On at least one very solemn occasion he publicly called upon God to strike him dead upon the spot if his words were not divinely inspired.[4] Now it is clear that no man has a right to demand that God should work a miracle; and, while the challenge was well calculated to make a deep impression on the ignorant and the credulous, to any one who was not simply carried away by the

[1] "Primum in simplicitate cordis mei nuntio tibi . . . quod non mentior: nam sedulus veritatis semper observator fui. . . . Semper hoc primum doctrinae fundamentum esse putavi." And again: "Si quis non solum secundum rationem sed etiam juxta evangelicam normam Dei gloriam totus intendens recte vixerit, et quotidie roget ab eo quod ad suam et aliorum pertinent salutem, illum minime credendum est quod Deus tantum errorem dissimulet et a diabolo . . . decipi assidue permittat" (*ibid.*). But it is not necessary in this case to postulate diabolical agency, and, on the other hand, we cannot safely assign limits to the divine permission of self-deception.

[2] Take, for instance, this one sentence: "Fateor inde [*i.e.* ex revelationibus] ita fidei lumen in me adauctum ut quae ad ipsam Christi fidem pertinent jam non credam, sed propemodum dicam et palpem" (book iv.). Could this be said without presumption?

[3] Amort, *De Revelationibus*, etc., p. 84. There is of course no lack of protestations of humility in Fra Girolamo's writings, *e.g.* "Spiritus hic meus . . . ab omni superbia et inani gloria me purgare et custodire potissimum curavit" (*ibid.*). And certainly from pride and vain glory of the vulgar and grosser sort Fra Girolamo was conspicuously free.

[4] This was on 27th February 1498.

feelings of the moment it could prove nothing, or rather it could only prove that Savonarola was capable of stooping to a rhetorical device which was unworthy of himself, irreverent towards God, and of its very nature deceptive. We are willing to believe that in uttering this challenge Fra Girolamo acted in good faith; but we find it impossible to believe that one who could thus unwittingly deceive others was not himself the victim of a delusion.

Again, it seems hardly possible to doubt that Savonarola went out of his way to expose himself to the danger of self-deception. The recipient of what seem to be visions or apparitions, says S. John of the Cross, should as far as possible resist and reject them, and should by no means take pleasure in them. This, he says, is a safe rule, because, if they be in reality Divine favours, God will know how to work the effect which He desires. Let the soul, he adds, neither keep such visions or apparitions stored up in the memory, nor allow itself to be guided by them in its actions or designs.[1] Speaking of words which seem to be addressed by God to the soul, he says: "It is impossible that a soul which does not regard such words with suspicion (*quæ has allocutiones internas non horret*) should not be frequently deceived";[2] and he altogether condemns the conduct of those who interrogate God in the hope of receiving a direct response.[3] It is true that Fra Girolamo assures us, as has been said, that he very reluctantly entered upon his prophetic ministry, and he has told us how on one particular occasion he tried without success to compose a sermon in which nothing should be said of his visions. But a single effort of this kind falls far short of that persevering and consistent attitude of self-distrust of which S. John of the Cross here speaks, and which is recommended by so many others who have written on the subject. Again and again did Savonarola "interrogate God in the hope of receiving a divine response"; and not merely this, but he allowed his hearers to know that he had done so, and that he expected an answer on a definite date. This surely was to invite delusion, and to expose himself to a serious temptation.

There is, moreover, another aspect of the argument from his own subjective certainty, advanced by Savonarola, of which account must be taken. Starting from his own unshaken conviction that he was the recipient of divine communication, Fra Girolamo proceeded to assure his hearers that if only they were more pure of heart they too

[1] Amort, pp. 207, 216. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 228. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 210.

would be so enlightened by the Holy Spirit that they could not fail to recognise the truth of his prophetic utterances. There is, to our thinking, something questionable in this rather disconcerting appeal to a tender conscience. No one has a right to expect or demand from God a larger measure of illumination than is necessary and sufficient to enable him firmly to assent to the truths of faith, or again, to enable him rightly to apply the rules of Christian prudence, whether to the occasional crises or to the ordinary conduct of life. And, consequently, no one has a right to persuade another to attribute to his own sinfulness or want of purity of heart the absence of some more special enlightenment. There can be no doubt that, especially in Fra Girolamo's later years, many devout and God-fearing persons were sorely perplexed concerning the matters now under consideration ; and it would seem that his influence practically tended to drive such perplexed souls to take refuge in a highly illusory and dangerous form of illuminism. Savonarola did indeed openly profess not to claim that the truth of his predictions should be accepted as on a point of faith ; yet, by publicly and repeatedly declaring that God would severely punish the incredulous, he imposed a burden of duty where, so far as we can see, no obligation could lie. And when he goes so far as to say that the persistent, or, as he would say, the obstinate and pertinacious rejection of his revelations was inconsistent with the possession of the "habit of faith," and that those who were guilty of this were no true Christians, he appears to us to have so evidently transgressed the limits of his right to judge, and to express his judgment, of others, that once more the very vehemence of his language seems to recoil upon himself.

But, after all, it was not the subjective test, if such it deserves to be called, on which he laid the chief stress in his repeated demands upon the faith of the Florentines, and his warnings that they would be punished for their unbelief. His principal appeal was to the signs whereby God had confirmed the truth of his predictions. And these signs were of two kinds, viz. the actual and exact fulfilment of what had been foretold, and the results of his preaching in the moral reform of the city. Now, as regards the fulfilment of predictions, it surely cannot be maintained with any confidence that those of his predictions of a public nature which were fulfilled transcended the limits of human foresight. It must of course be admitted that Savonarola was distinguished among his contemporaries by a remarkable clearness of vision into the future. But this clearness of vision, as it seems to

us, may with the highest probability be adequately accounted for by a certain natural sagacity, coupled with a deep sense of the moral corruption of the times, and that kind of acquaintance with the ways of divine Providence which he had gathered from deeply pondering the historical records and prophetic warnings of the Bible, and which had become in a manner instinctive with him. Not indeed that every man of noble character and of pure heart learns to read the signs of the times. Yet nobility of character, and a spotless purity of life, are undoubtedly predisposing conditions which, when united with natural sagacity, render possible a truer forecast of the future than is to be expected from those who are blinded by passion, and distracted by the petty interests of the passing moment.

Then, too, a certain allowance must be made for the possibilities of happy conjecture, and also for the influence of the prophetic ideals, if we may so style them, which were current in his time. Savonarola lived in an age when the minds of many earnest men, and women too, were drawn by a kind of irresistible attraction to venture on predictions of future events. We may well believe Fra Girolamo when he assures us that he had paid but scant attention to the vaticinations of those who may compendiously be styled his fellow-prophets, though some of them lived two centuries or more before his time. Nevertheless, the general drift of their predictions was common property, and nothing was more natural than that such a man as Savonarola should be unconsciously influenced by them.[1] He was not the first to foretell that grievous calamities were to fall upon the Church, nor was he the first to predict that salvation should come by the hand of a temporal prince, and that this prince should be not the Emperor but a king of France. The difference lay herein, that when Savonarola began to thunder forth his warnings,

[1] On the subject of mediæval prophecy the two best dissertations known to us are those of Tocco, "Il Savonarola e la Profezia," in *Vita Italiana nel Rinascimento* (pp. 352 *sqq.*), and of Rohr, "Die Prophetie im letzten Jahrlundert vor der Reformation," usw., in the *Historisches Jahrbuch*, xix. pp. 29 *sqq.*, 547 *sqq.* Among the predecessors of Savonarola Tocco enumerates the Abbot Gioachino (†1202), Piero Olivi (†1298), Amaldo da Villanova, Ubertino da Casale (circ. 1305), Stoppa de' Bostichi, Angelo de Monticelli, Giovanni di Roquetaillade, S. Brigit of Sweden, S. Catherine of Siena, Tomassuccio da Foligno, Giovanni delle Celle, the Abbot Telesforo (circ. 1386), S. Vincent Ferrer, and several others. Rohr adds some German names to the list. Speaking generally, they all agree in predicting terrible chastisements. Some hold that the end of the world is at hand. Others, like Savonarola, predict a great religious revival, the conversion of the Turks, etc.

the prospects of a French invasion were conspicuously imminent. His prediction that the French king would indeed come was, as every one knows, fulfilled. But the high hopes based upon the French invasion were doomed to bitter disappointment; and the veracity of the prophet could be saved only by the explanation that the promises of a reformation to be brought about by means of Charles VIII. had been subject to conditions. But with respect to certain other predictions which have been related in the foregoing chapter, viz. that of the conversion of the Turks, and of the prosperity of Florence and the extension of her dominions, Savonarola committed himself to the uncompromising assertion that they were not conditional, but absolute and irrevocable; and in the concluding paragraphs of the *Compendium Revelationum* he went as near as was possible to a definite statement that they would be fulfilled within ten years.[1] Now, the only conclusion which, as it seems to us, can be reasonably drawn from the complete miscarriage of these promises, thus absolutely and irrevocably made, is, that those predictions which were fulfilled were after all nothing better than shrewd conjectures, put forth with impassioned conviction and most courageous boldness, and, as we are willing to believe, in all good faith, but conjectures after all.

As regards the moral reformation of Florence, we would say (1) hat it was not exclusively the result of Savonarola's prophecies as such, but principally the fruit of his earnest inculcation of Christian doctrine and of Christian morality, and his severe condemnation of vice; and (2) that although it was undoubtedly helped forward by his predictions, this of itself proves nothing. If the predictions had not produced some good results, they could not have possessed even the semblance of a claim to be regarded as divinely inspired. Many a child has been terrified by false alarms into saying its prayers. But this does not prove that the creations of a child's imagination have a real and independent existence. Many a simple soul has been stirred to feelings of devotion, and even perchance to acts of very real and solid virtue, by some tale of legendary hagiology. But this does not dispense M. Duchesne

[1] On 3rd May 1495, he assured his hearers that some of those then living should see the conversion of the Turks; and on 28th May he told them (alluding to Pisa) that they should have everything back, and, moreover, that their dominions should be increased. He told them, too, that in the coming plague the "Tepidi" should die in proportionately greater numbers than the devout. Was this prediction verified?

and the Bollandists from the necessary, if sometimes ungracious, task of turning the search-light of historical criticism upon traditions of spurious or doubtful origin.

Moreover, it is by no means clear that the results of Fra Girolamo's prophecies, and more particularly of the reiterated assertion of his claims to be regarded as an inspired prophet, deserve to be called purely and simply good. To take only a simple instance—was it a good result that in later days the people of Florence should be encouraged to set at naught the menaces of the reigning Pope even though that Pope was Alexander VI., and to listen rather to one who explicitly declared that he held his communion directly from God? Was it not one result of the prophetic claims of Savonarola that the city of Florence was brought perilously near to schismatical disobedience? This is a point which we cannot develop here without unduly anticipating the course of the subsequent narrative. But the mere mention of the conflicts which occupy so large a portion of the record of Fra Girolamo's last years, and which are so intimately bound up with the question of his alleged divine mission, may be sufficient as a reminder that the moral reformation which he undoubtedly effected was not the only result of his preaching.

"In the absence of convincing proof," says Gerson, "no private revelations are to be accepted as indisputably genuine until after the death of the person who professes to have received them . . . [nor] until all his acts, words, and writings, to the end of his life, have been first examined." And the reason is, that "the devil often for a long time tells the truth (inculcat vera) that he may at last draw a man into error (persuadeat falsa)."[1] Of course we do not postulate, in Savonarola's case, any special diabolical agency. There can be no doubt that much which is by mediæval writers ascribed to the direct action of the Devil may be set down to the account of natural causes. But the caution that alleged revelations are to be judged not merely by their immediate results, but by their remoter issues, is one in which S. Thomas Aquinas is at one with Gerson and other writers.[2] Amort lays it down that: "Doubtful revelations, if they bring with them the danger of . . . causing dissensions in the Church, are to be prohibited by public authority." And still more to the purpose is the "rule" that: "Revelations, on the

[1] Amort, p. 84.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 233.

strength of which it is pretended that the recipient of them is dispensed from the observance of some law, natural or ecclesiastical," deserve no credence.[1]

How far these last rules are applicable to the case of Savonarola is a question which must be judged in the light of subsequent events. But it is right that they should be at least mentioned in this place.

But what is to be said about the plea, repeatedly urged by Fra Girolamo, that all, or nearly all, good men recognised his prophetic mission, while those who called it in question were men of abandoned life, or at least such as were only externally religious and devout?[2] Unfortunately, we can only reply by denying the alleged fact. There is no reason whatever, that we can see, for calling in question the high character of some of those who, during Fra Girolamo's lifetime and since, have believed him to be deluded. Nor can we admit that Savonarola had any right to proclaim that the apparent uprightness of some of his adversaries was no better than a cloak for hypocrisy or hidden wickedness. He himself admitted that it was not given to him to read the secrets of hearts. And even had he possessed such a gift, its possession would not have released him from the duty of observing the natural law which prescribes respect for our neighbour's reputation. The bearing of these remarks, as well as of others which we have had occasion to make in the course of this chapter, will appear more fully in the sequel.

There is, however, yet another consideration which claims our attention before we can, for the present at least, dismiss the subject. Among the reasons which render the prophecies of Fra Girolamo at least open to suspicion is the strange flattery of the city of Florence with which they are inseparably bound up. It is of course conceivable that God should have chosen Florence as the scene of special manifestations of His goodness and power, and that He should have destined the city to be the centre whence the leaven of reformation should spread throughout Italy, and even throughout the world. But it may be doubted whether, if such had been His design, He would have wished this design to be

[1] Amort, pp. 270, 281.

[2] He speaks of the "Tepidi, quos saepe redarguo, et quibuscum assiduus mihi est conflictus. . . . Hi sunt, mihi crede, Pharisaei; qui cum Herodianis consilium inierunt ut nos caperent in sermone" (*Dyalogus*, book v.).

communicated in set terms to the citizens, who were perhaps already somewhat prone to a certain civic pride and corporate self-sufficiency.[1] And it may also be doubted whether the Providence of God could be truly described as so solicitous for the civic liberties of the Florentines, and at the same time so indignant with the citizens of Pisa for their efforts to secure independence for themselves. And whatever may be thought of these *à priori* probabilities, it may at least be questioned whether, in any intelligible sense, the work of ecclesiastical reform can be said to have actually spread from Florence.

[1] "Great," says Fra Girolamo, in one of his sermons (S. 8 on Amos, 9th June 1495) "is the blessing of creation. Still greater is the favour of having been created in the image of God. Greater still that of having been born among Christians. But: Maggior beneficio ancora è *che tu sia nato in questa grande ciptà*, et non in molti luoghi del christianismo dove si vive come bestie. Più grande ancora che dopo molte tenebre. . . . Dio t' habbia illuminata: et prima t' ha illuminata delle cose interiori . . . et poi di fuori. Item t' ha illuminata superabundantemente, et hatti dato cose che non si danno a molti, cioè ad rivelarti le cose future. *Non fecit taliter omni nationi*. . . . Grande beneficio e stato ancora questo, che havendo voluto Iddio prenuntiare queste cose ad tucta la Italia egli habbi electo te nella quale s'habbino ad predire queste cose, et da te spendersi il lume nelle altre."

CHAPTER V

SAVONAROLA AND LORENZO DE' MEDICI

HAVING preached during the Advent of 1490 at S. Marco, in the following Lent Savonarola occupied the pulpit of the Duomo (commonly called in contemporary documents S. Maria Reparata, or S. Reparata),[1] and his sermons began to produce a marked impression in the city. His predictions of impending disaster, and his fearless denunciations of vice, drew upon him the attention of all classes, and from the outset gave occasion to much division of opinion and sentiment. He himself, in a letter to his faithful friend and fellow-labourer, Fra Domenico Buonvicino da Pescia, who was then preaching at Pisa, gives us a glimpse of the state of affairs, and reveals his own inmost thoughts, hopes, and convictions :—

"Our affairs [he writes] go on prosperously. For God works wonderfully, although we experience much opposition from the great men of the city, as I will more fully explain to you on your return. At present it is not expedient to write about such matters. Many have feared, and some still fear, that I may be treated as was Fra Bernardino.[2] And indeed I have been in some danger (res nostra non fuit sine periculo in hac parte) but I have always hoped in the Lord, knowing that the heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord ; He will turn it whithersoever He will. I trust in Him that He will do great things by means of my words (per os nostrum) ; for He daily consoles me, and strengthens my timidity by the words of His angels (per voces spirituum suorum), who often say to me : 'Fear not, speak boldly whatever God shall inspire you to say, for the Lord is with you. The Scribes and Pharisees fight against you, but they shall not prevail.'. . . I frequently predict the renovation of the Church,

[1] We also find the forms S. Liperata and S. Liberata. Liperata is obviously a corruption of Reparata, and Liberata an erroneous correction of the barbarous Liperata.

[2] Fra Bernardino da Feltre, a Franciscan preacher of great holiness of life, who has received the honour of canonisation, had been expelled from Florence in 1488 by reason of the vehemence with which he had inveighed against usury (*cf.* Pastor, v. 109 *sqq.*).

and the coming tribulations, but never absolutely, and always basing my predictions on some passage of Holy Scripture (semper cum fundamento Scripturarum); so that no one, unless he be perversely disposed, can find fault."[1]

The guarded allusions, in this letter, to some opposition and danger which the preacher has recently experienced, are explained by an incident which Savonarola's biographers have erroneously placed in the latter part of the year 1491, but which almost certainly belongs to this Lent. He received a visit one day from five of the leading citizens of Florence—Domenico Bonsi, Guidantonio Vespucci, Paolantonio Soderini, Filippo Valori, and Bernardo Rucellai—all of them men who had rendered distinguished services to the State in various embassies, but whose united diplomacy was to meet with a signal check when brought to bear on the intrepid Friar. They came to warn him that, by his freedom of speech, he exposed both himself and his convent to serious risk; but when they found themselves in his presence their courage failed them, and they faltered in the delivery of their message. For it was, in fact, a message which they had come to deliver, as the Friar himself roundly told them. It was Lorenzo de' Medici, he said, who had sent them; and he bade them admonish him to do penance for his sins, for that God was no respecter of persons, and would not spare the princes of the earth. And when the envoys of the great man reminded him that he might perchance be sent into exile, as Fra Bernardino da Feltre had been, he replied: "I care nothing for your threats of exile, because this, your city, is but a tiny patch (come un grano di lente) on the surface of the earth. But," he added, "this new fashion of teaching will triumph, and the old will collapse. And although I am a stranger in the city, and Lorenzo the first man in the State, yet I shall stay here, and it is he who must go hence." Then he proceeded to speak of the condition of Florence, and of all Italy, in terms which caused his hearers to marvel at his knowledge of political affairs.[2] Moreover, about the same time he declared, in

[1] Gherardi, pp. 281-82.

[2] Cinozzi, pp. 13, 14; Burlamacchi, p. 31; Villari, i. 139. Cinozzi and Burlamacchi say nothing of the threat of exile, which Villari has presumably drawn from the *Vita Latina*, or from the *Vulnera Diligentis* of Fra Benedetto, neither of which documents has hitherto been published in full. Such a threat, expressed or implied, is however presupposed by Savonarola's assertion that he should stay in Florence, and that Lorenzo must go thence, and seems to be alluded to in the letter to Fra Domenico quoted above.

the presence of many witnesses, that Lorenzo, the Pope, and the King of Naples would all soon die.[1] The prediction was fulfilled, so far as the Pope and the Magnifico were concerned, in the following year, 1492. Ferrante, King of Naples, died in January 1494.

This incident of the embassy of the five citizens Savonarola himself related from the pulpit five years afterwards, two of the five being actually present.[2] Three of them, in fact, became, after the death of Lorenzo, firm supporters of the Friar.

In the meanwhile Lorenzo, whether because he dreaded the consequences of any extreme measure, or, as we are willing to believe, from some more honourable motive, refrained from any attempt to carry into effect the threats with which he had in vain sought to terrify him.[3] Not only was Fra Girolamo left entirely unmolested, but he was invited to preach in the Palazzo, before the Signory and the other magistrates of the city, on the Wednesday in Easter week. He told his hearers plainly that he did not feel altogether at his ease in addressing so unwonted an audience. "I am not master here," he said, "as in the church, and therefore I must behave with a certain politeness (me urbanius habere), like Christ in the house of the Pharisee."[4] But whatever his feelings of embarrassment may have been, they did not hinder him from expressing himself with remarkable freedom concerning the duties of those who were entrusted with public offices. All the good and all the evil in the State, he said, depended on its chief or prince; "if he would come with us, he might render the city holy."[5] But some men, when they enjoy power, become "incorrigible tyrants,"

[1] Villari, *loc. cit.*

[2] This is expressly stated by Cinozzi (*loc. cit.*), who heard the sermon, and saw the men among the audience.

[3] Guicciardini writes: "Non piaceva il predicare del S. a Lorenzo; nondimeno, parte perchè non lo toccava nel vivo, parte perchè d'avere altra volta cacciato da Firenze Fra Bernardino . . . aveva ricevuto carico nel popolo, *e forse avendo qualche riverenza a Fra Jeronimo* . . . non gli proibiva il predicare," etc. (*Storia Fiorentina*, p. 123).

[4] From the rough draft of the sermon jotted down by Savonarola himself, and printed by Villari (vol. i. Append. p. xxxiii.).

[5] The allusion is to Nathanael, who, though no fisherman, accompanied S. Peter on the lake of Galilee as related in S. John xxi. 1 *sqq*. This passage is the Gospel of the day on which Fra Girolamo was preaching; and the application is, that the secular power should be invited to co-operate with the preachers of the Gospel.

guilty of all manner of injustice and oppression. On reading these words it is easy to jump to the conclusion that an offensive allusion to Lorenzo de' Medici was intended; but, in fact, so far as can be judged from the rough draft which is all that has been preserved of this sermon, the preacher's condemnation of the abuses of arbitrary despotism was quite general in its form; and it was followed by an exhortation to those whom he was addressing to act far otherwise. Let them keep steadily in view not their own private interests but the public good. Let them set Christ before their eyes, and place their own hopes in the eternal happiness of heaven. Thus, and thus alone, can they make the people happy.[1]

Although, however, Fra Girolamo's sermon in the Palazzo was not, in our opinion, quite so calculated to give personal offence to the head of the State as Villari seems to think, we cannot wonder that Lorenzo should have wished to raise a barrier against the growing influence of the Friar. His private efforts to induce Savonarola to modify the character of his sermons having failed, he induced Mariano della Barba (da Gennazzano) to undertake the task of controverting his conclusions, and publicly to admonish him that the prediction of future events, and the adoption of an unusual style of preaching, was a mark of presumption, and was calculated to arouse dissension among the people.[2] Accordingly, on Ascension Day 1491, Fra Mariano openly attacked Savonarola in a sermon, preached at San Gallo, on the text: "It is not yours to know the times and the moments," etc. Cinozzi, who was present, declares that the preacher's manner was such as to alienate from the preacher many of his friends and admirers, and among them Cinozzi himself; and

[1] Villari, *loc. cit.* In the Gospel (*loc. cit.*), the Apostolic fishermen are bidden to cast the net on the right side of the ship, and this after day has dawned. The preacher, by an obvious moral application, condemns the conduct of those who "cast their nets by night, and on the left side," *i.e.* who seek their private interests by unjust means; and he exhorts his hearers to cast on the right side, and in full daylight, *i.e.* to act in all things with justice, and with an eye to the common good. Moreover, the common good of the people is to be understood in a Christian sense.

[2] Ordinò col detto Fra Mariano che facessi una predica nella quale si contenessi che il dir cose future e predicar fuor del consueto era cosa presuntuosa, e non era se non mettere sedizione ne' popoli" (Cinozzi, p. 14). Burlamacchi reproduces Cinozzi's words so precisely that there can be little doubt as to the source from which he has drawn. It is this which makes us a little suspicious as to the details which he here and there adds to Cinozzi's simpler narrative. Moreover, even where his statements of fact are admitted, caution is needed with reference to his imputation of motives.

that by this one sermon he may be said to have lost the reputation which he had built up in the course of many years.[1] Burlamacchi hereupon informs us that this was the fulfilment of a prophecy which Savonarola had previously made to Domenico Benivieni. Benivieni had told Fra Girolamo that if only he had the eloquence of Mariano he would be an unrivalled preacher. Savonarola had replied—according to Burlamacchi—in words which echoed, while they reversed, those of S. John the Baptist concerning our Lord: "*Me oportet crescere, illum autem minui*—I must needs wax greater, but he must grow less." For the honour of Fra Girolamo we would willingly believe that he never uttered these words, or that what he did say had been misunderstood and so misreported.[2]

However this may be, Savonarola deemed it his duty to reply to Mariano's discourse, which he did by delivering, either on the following Sunday, or on the festival of Pentecost, a powerful sermon on the same text. What was the nature of his reply we are not told, but it may be taken for granted that it was substantially identical with what he wrote on the subject in his *Compendium Revelationum*, with which the reader has already made acquaintance. One passage Cinozzi has preserved for us, which it may be worth while to reproduce here. Addressing himself to Fra Mariano, who, however, was not present, the preacher said:—

"My brother, I would that you were here; but I trust that at least my words will be reported to you. Do you not remember that not many days since you came to me here at S. Marco, and with great humility and

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[1] "Nel modo del suo procedere monstrò tanta passione che etiam quelli che eron suo familiari e suo difensori, si accorsono e conobbono che procedeva da gran passione. E io mi ricordo, essendo a detta predica, che ero uno di quelli che più tosto dependevo dalla parte sua che dal P. f. Ieronimo; e quella fu causa insieme con molti altri di lassar le sue predicazioni. Fuvvi a detta predica Lorenzo e el conte Giovanni della Mirandola, che anco lui allora era contra P. f. Ieronimo, messer Agnolo da Montepulciano e quasi tutto il fiore delli uomini da bene; in modo che all' uscir della predica fu fatta discissione inter omnes. Ma certo quella fu quasi causa di fargli perdere la reputazione che avea acquistata in parecchi anni," etc. (Cinozzi, p. 15). Yet, in the years 1492-93-94, Mariano preached on three successive Good Fridays at Ferrara, a circumstance which makes it clear that his reputation was by no means gone (*Diario Ferrarese* in Muratori, *Scriptores*, xxiv. 288). Later still, he often preached in Rome before the Pope.

[2] Savonarola had said to Lorenzo's deputies that the new *style of preaching* would prosper, and that the old would decline (*vide supra*). We venture to suggest that Burlamacchi has taken hold of these words and given them an offensively personal turn.

meekness gave me to understand that my preaching gave you great pleasure, and appeared to you calculated to produce much fruit, and that you offered me your services, and declared that you would be always ready to help me, with more to the same effect? Who, then, has now put it into your head to speak as you do? Why have you so suddenly changed your mind?"[1]

Whereby, adds Cinozzi, every one understood that Mariano had so acted out of complaisance to others, and also (though this does not seem to follow) because he found that his own following grew daily less. Shortly afterwards Mariano left Florence for Rome, where he was subsequently elected general of his Order. He seems to have become almost as great a favourite with Alexander VI. as he had been with Lorenzo de' Medici, and his influence was openly used in opposition to Fra Girolamo. Before his departure, however, the controversial passage of arms, of which we have spoken, was followed by an interchange of courtesies between the rival preachers. Mariano invited Savonarola to sing the High Mass on some great festival at S. Gallo, and Savonarola accepted the invitation.[2]

It is not easy to form a just estimate of Fra Mariano's character and motives. That he was a worldly-minded man, and a complaisant courtier, can hardly be denied; but it is at least probable that, while he admired the fervid eloquence and courageous zeal of Fra Girolamo, he sincerely believed that his vaticinations were mischievous in their effects, or at least dangerous in their tendency. Burlamacchi, after his wont, regards his acts of courtesy to Savonarola as due to mere hypocrisy. To this hostile verdict we cannot, in the absence of better evidence, subscribe. Mariano's character will not, of course, for a moment bear comparison with that of his great rival. But while we recognise that the future General of the Augustinians was no hero, and that he had many faults and failings, we venture to doubt whether he was really no better—as Burlamacchi would have us believe—than an odious hypocrite.

But to return to the relations between Savonarola and Lorenzo. In the course of this same year, 1491, Fra Girolamo was, by an unanimous election, chosen Prior of the convent of S. Marco. The convent had been founded and greatly enriched by Cosimo de' Medici, and it was indeed one of the most striking monuments of the

[1] Cinozzi, p. 15.

[2] Burlamacchi, p. 34; Villari, i. 143.

princely munificence of this great family.[1] It need not, then, cause any surprise that a custom should have arisen whereby each newly elected Prior used, after his installation, to visit and pay his respects to the head of the founder's house. Burlamacchi, indeed, represents that the visit was made to Lorenzo in his capacity as head of the State (per riconoscerlo come capo della Repubblica), but we venture to doubt whether this statement fairly represents the real origin of the usage.[2] However this may be, it was natural that Lorenzo should expect from Savonarola this customary mark of recognition. But whether it was that he regarded the act as savouring too much of an acknowledgment of a right of patronage, or whether he desired to mark his disapproval of the political supremacy which the family had gradually acquired, Fra Girolamo altogether declined to set foot in the palace of the Medici. He owed his election, he said, to God alone, and God alone should have his acknowledgments. Lorenzo, on his side, grumbled that a stranger had come to live in his house, and yet would not pay him a visit.[3] Whether, perchance, Fra Girolamo might have acted more prudently had he conformed to a custom which, after all, need not necessarily be regarded as an abuse, we will not undertake to say, but he is at least entitled to the credit of having been, on this occasion, as on so many others, staunch in his adherence to what appeared to him to be the best course of action.

It is, on the other hand, greatly to the credit of Lorenzo that he showed no spiteful resentment against the new Friar in consequence of the omission of this ceremonial visit. More than once he visited the convent, and walked in the garden with the friars, doubtless with the intention of meeting the Prior. But he seems to have refrained from asking to see him personally; and Savonarola, on his side, declined to leave his cell to welcome the distinguished visitor, unless the latter should expressly send for him.[4] Never-

[1] S. Marco had previously been a monastery of Silvestrine monks. The Dominicans of the stricter observance obtained possession of the house and church in 1435; but the whole fabric of the convent was in such a state of dilapidation that Cosimo determined to rebuild it entirely, and the work was entrusted to Michelozzo Michelozzi. The splendid library of S. Marco was also the gift of Cosimo. The walls of S. Marco, as every one knows, are still bright with the frescoes of Fra Angelico (Marchese, *Sunto Storico*, pp. 44 *sqq.*).

[2] Burlamacchi, p. 29.

[3] Burlamacchi, *loc. cit.*

[4] Burlamacchi, p. 30. "While admiring the spirit of Savonarola," writes Father O'Neil, O.P., "we are tempted to regret that he did not meet Lorenzo.

theless, Lorenzo did not desist from his hopes of winning over the inflexible Prior. He sent to the convent a considerable sum of money as an alms, but Fra Girolamo transferred it at once to the confraternity of the "good men of S. Martin," to be distributed among the poor, saying that silver and copper money was enough for the needs of the brethren, and that they had no need of gold.[1]

He used, adds Burlamacchi, to say in the pulpit that it is the business of a watch-dog to bark and to attack robbers, and not to allow itself to be silenced by the bribe of a bone or other food. Whether, in using these words, or others to the same effect, Savonarola intended to allude to Lorenzo's alms appears to us to be very doubtful. We should prefer to attribute the alms themselves to the generosity of the donor; and to suppose that the sending of them to the Buoni Uomini di S. Martino was due to Fra Girolamo's love of religious poverty and his charity to the poor, rather than to any desire to mark his independence of Lorenzo. It seems to have been his usual custom to decline the responsibility of distributing the alms which he collected for the poor. And so long as there was a kind of charity organisation society—of a thoroughly Christian character—in active operation in the city, it was surely the part of prudence to help its members to carry on their beneficent work. We do not yield to Burlamacchi himself in our admiration of Fra Girolamo's refusal to accept Lorenzo's gold for the use of the convent; not, however, because it was Lorenzo's, but because "to give is more blessed than to receive."

Early in the year 1492 Lorenzo fell seriously ill at Careggi, his villa, some two miles distant from Florence, and it soon became evident that his end was drawing near. In this extremity Lorenzo caused Fra Girolamo to be sent for that he might assist him in his last moments. According to Cinozzi and Burlamacchi, although Don Guido degli Angioli, his chaplain, and Fra Mariano della Barba were both at hand, Lorenzo declared that he would have no other confessor but the Prior of S. Marco, for that he was the only true "religious" of his acquaintance.[2] Burlamacchi adds that, when

Without any sacrifice of dignity this could have been effected, as Lorenzo had practically 'gone half way.'" And he adds, in a note: "Perhaps the course of events might have been changed had these men first met then," etc. (*Jerome Savonarola*, p. 24).

[1] Burlamacchi, *loc. cit.*

[2] Cinozzi, p. 16; Burlamacchi, p. 37. "Hieronymum vocari jussit, virum scilicet intrepidum, et quem nec blanditiis nec ullis artibus a veritate flecti posse comperisset" (Pico, p. 24).

first summoned, Fra Girolamo demurred, bidding the messenger tell Lorenzo that he was not a man suited for this purpose (dite a Lorenzo, ch'io non sono il suo bisogno) because it was impossible that they should agree, and that therefore it was not expedient that he should go. On receiving this message, the sick man bade the messenger return, and charged him to tell Fra Girolamo that he was ready faithfully to carry out whatever instructions he might have to give.[1] Of this hesitation Cinozzi, an earlier witness, says nothing, and we take leave to regard this part of the story as apocryphal. It is, to say the least, hardly creditable to the memory of Savonarola, for it might surely be expected that a man of truly apostolic zeal would hasten without a moment's delay to the assistance of a dying sinner, whatever his worldly condition might be. What passed between these two great men at this their only interview will never be certainly known. If we might trust the narrative of Cinozzi and Burlamacchi, with which that of Pico agrees in the main, Lorenzo proposed to make his confession, but Savonarola declared that he must first remind him of three conditions under which alone he could hope for pardon. He must have a lively faith in the mercy of God, he must make restitution of all ill-gotten goods, and he must restore their liberties to the people of Florence. His faith in God's mercy Lorenzo fervently professed; and he promised, so far as was possible, full restitution wherever it was due, and undertook to leave suitable directions to his heirs to do in this behalf whatever he might be unable personally to carry out; but on hearing the third demand he made no answer, and Fra Girolamo departed without having received his confession.[2] But notwithstanding the authority of Savonarola's early biographers we venture to think that these details are intrinsically all but incredible. We can hardly believe that Fra Girolamo would have made his own conception of political duty (on which after all a difference of opinion was possible) a test of the fitness of a sinner to receive absolution at the hour of death. And

[1] Burlamacchi, *loc. cit.*

[2] Cinozzi, p. 16. Burlamacchi (p. 38) makes Lorenzo declare that three crimes troubled his conscience beyond all others, viz. the sack of Volterra, the misappropriation of the funds of the Monte di Pietà, and the bloodshed which had followed the conspiracy of the Pazzi. He is careful, however, to let it be understood that all this was said by way of preliminary to the sacramental confession. Pico (p. 24) agrees with Cinozzi, and omits the details given by Burlamacchi.

we are still more unwilling to believe him to have been so forgetful of his duty as to reveal to any one what had passed on such an occasion. For although, as is alleged, no kind of sacramental confession was even begun, a priest, under such circumstances, would be bound by a strict obligation, under the natural law, to observe the seal of secrecy. Nor again can we readily believe that Lorenzo would have confided to his friends, as Burlamacchi suggests that he did, the details of the interview.[1] Moreover, the account of the matter given by Politian, who was actually present when Savonarola entered the room, is quite inconsistent with the story as told by Cinozzi, Pico, and Burlamacchi.[2] According to Politian, Fra Girolamo came, not to hear the confession of Lorenzo, but to comfort him with words of friendly counsel. He exhorted the dying statesman to hold firmly to his profession of the Catholic faith, to resolve upon a good life for the future if he should recover, and to be resigned to die if God should so will. To these admonitions Lorenzo made the answers that were to be expected of a Christian at the point of death. And when Savonarola was about to leave the room, the dying man asked him for a parting blessing, whereupon Fra Girolamo recited the prayers for the departing, and Lorenzo devoutly joined in the responses.[3]

For our part we prefer to accept Politian's version of the facts rather than that of Cinozzi, Pico, and Burlamacchi, not merely because it is more honourable to Lorenzo de' Medici, but also

[1] The sole authority for the story, as given by Cinozzi, is Fra Salvestro Maruffi, though he thinks that he heard it also from Fra Girolamo himself. Salvestro was notoriously a gossip, and it is not safe to place any reliance upon his reminiscences, especially when reported at second hand. Burlamacchi asserts, however, that Domenico Benivieni used to relate the same story on the authority of certain intimate friends of Lorenzo.

[2] Villari is at pains to show that the two narratives are not inconsistent, and even that Politian's account implies that Savonarola refused to absolve Lorenzo. Unless we are much mistaken, Politian's letter implies rather that Fra Girolamo did not come for the purpose of hearing Lorenzo's confession, or at least was not asked to do so. He had, in fact, already received the last sacraments (*cf.* Villari, i. 158 *sqq.*).

[3] The above seems to us to be a fair interpretation of Politian's words: "Abierat vix dum Picus, cum Ferrarienis Hieronymus . . . cubiculum ingreditur; *hortatur ut fidem teneat . . . ut quam emendatissime posthac vivere destinet . . . ut mortem denique, si necesse sit, aequo animo toleret.* . . . Recedebat homo jam cum Laurentius: Heus, inquit, benedictionem, Pater, priusquam a nobis proficisceris. Simul demisso capite vultuque . . . . subinde *ad verba illius et preces rite ac memoriter responsitabat* (Politian to Jacopo "the Antiquary"; Villari, i. 184).

because it is more honourable to Fra Girolamo Savonarola himself.[1] Moreover, it agrees better with the unquestioned fact that Lorenzo had already received the last rites of the Church, and this with an edifying appearance of humility and devotion.[2] It is of course quite possible that we are mistaken in our opinion; but we must be content to refer those of our readers who may wish to peruse a highly imaginative development of the other story to the pages of Villari. We may add that Dr Creighton, in an Appendix to the third volume of his *History of the Papacy*, examines the question in detail, and arrives at the same conclusion with ourselves, and on precisely similar grounds.[3]

[1] "Tel est le très-simple et très-vraisemblable recit que Politien fait d'une entrevue également honorable pour les deux illustres personnages. Ce qui donne une autorité considérable à sa parole c'est qu' il avait été témoin de ce qu' il racconte, et qu' il écrit pour un ami, non pour la posterité" (Perrens, p. 65). Villari remarks that Politian would probably have left the room during the interview, and also that the correspondence of public men in those days was intended for other eyes besides those of the persons to whom their letters were, in the first instance, addressed. But Politian distinctly affirms that many friends were present, among whom he may himself certainly be numbered, when Savonarola recited the prayers for the dying at Lorenzo's bedside. It is this closing scene which brings into the clearest light the inconsistency of the two accounts.

[2] Villari, i. 158 *sqq.*

[3] Creighton, iii. 296 *sqq.*

CHAPTER VI

SAVONAROLA AND PIERO DE' MEDICI—SAVONAROLA AT BOLOGNA —THE SEPARATION OF S. MARCO FROM THE LOMBARD CONGREGATION

LORENZO DE' MEDICI died, as has been said, on 9th April 1492. He was succeeded, so far as it is right to speak of succession in the case of so indefinable a kind of power as that which Lorenzo had enjoyed, by his son Piero. Piero seems to have possessed few of the qualities which made Lorenzo, according to the measure of the times, a great statesman; he certainly inherited but a slender share of his father's good-fortune. Yet it is possible that to Savonarola the character of this gay and gallant youth, fonder of handball and football, of races and tournaments, than of diplomacy, was less abhorrent than that of his shrewd and calculating father; and even that his example, bad as it was in point of morality, was not so actively mischievous as that of Lorenzo. The great muscular strength of Piero helped to make him passionately devoted to all manner of active exercises, and his habits of activity may perhaps have helped to save him in the earlier days of his youth from some of the worst of those excesses to which Lorenzo was addicted. And in the case of a young prodigal there is always more hope of a change for the better than in that of one who has grown old in sinful habits.

Whatever the reason may have been, and possibly it may have been after all a reason of interest and policy, we shall find, in Fra Girolamo's relations with Piero, during the brief days of his power, no trace of that almost fierce spirit of independence which marks his attitude to Lorenzo as this has been depicted by Burlamacchi. But possibly again, as we have already suggested, Savonarola's relations with Lorenzo have themselves been in some degree misconstrued.

On the night of the 20th of April, which was Good Friday, about

a fortnight after Lorenzo's death, Fra Girolamo, who in that year was preaching the Lent in S. Lorenzo, had one of his more remarkable visions, which he thus relates himself in his *Compendium Revelationum*:[1]—

"I saw [he says] two crosses, whereof the one, which rose from the midst of the city of Rome, and reached even to the sky, was black, and it bore the inscription, CRVX IRAE DEI (the cross of God's anger). Immediately on its appearance I saw the sky dark with scudding clouds, and a tempest of wind, lightning, thunderbolts, hail, fire, and hurtling swords arose, and an immense multitude of men were slain, so that only a remnant was left. Thereafter I saw the sky grow calm and clear, and another cross rose up from the midst of Jerusalem, not less lofty than the first, but of a splendour so brilliant that it illuminated all the world, causing fresh flowers to spring on every side and joy to abound, and it bore the legend, CRVX MISERICORDIAE DEI (the cross of God's mercy). And forthwith all the nations of the earth flocked together to adore and embrace it."[2]

It is hardly necessary to say that, so far as this vision was conceived of by Savonarola, as prophetic of some immediately future time, it has not in any intelligible sense been fulfilled. But there is no need to repeat, with reference to this or other individual instances, what has already been said of his visions, revelations, and predictions in view of their general character.

As the apparition of the two crosses came to him at the close of Lent, so also the close of the following Advent was marked by another divine manifestation (as he deemed it), which, as Villari reminds us, has formed the subject of a multitude of medals, and has supplied the device which more than any other has been taken as summarising the prophetic preaching of Fra Girolamo.

This second vision, it may be noted, followed the death of Innocent VIII., and the election of Alexander VI., which had taken place in the previous July. Whatever hopes may have been aroused by the vigorous administration of the first days of Alexander's pontificate had been speedily dispelled. For it soon

[1] The church of San Lorenzo was under the immediate patronage of the Medici, who, as is well known, chose it as their place of sepulture. It is hardly credible that, if Lorenzo de' Medici had really entertained any serious fears of the effects of Fra Girolamo's sermons, Fra Girolamo would have been selected to preach the Lent in that church. The Lenten sermons of 1492 were the first of a series, continued in the Lent and summer months of 1494, on the Book of Genesis.

[2] *Compendium Revelationum*, pp. 244-45.

became only too clear that the energy which stood in so marked a contrast with the weakness of Innocent VIII. would, for the most part, only subserve a policy more flagrantly and openly selfish than that of his predecessor; and that Pontiffs who had extended an inexcusable toleration to vice had been succeeded by one who was himself shamelessly vicious.

"In the year 1492 [Savonarola writes] I saw, on the night preceding the last of my Advent sermons in the church of S. Reparata [*i.e.* the Duomo], a hand in the heavens grasping a sword whereon was inscribed, GLADIVS DOMINI SUPER TERRAM CITO ET VELOCITER (the Sword of the Lord upon the earth soon and speedily); while on the hand was written, VERA ET IVSTA SVNT IVDICIA DOMINI (the judgments of the Lord are true and just). But the arm to which the hand belonged seemed to come forth from three faces [symbolical of the Holy Trinity], whereof the first said, 'The wickedness of my sanctuary cries to me from the earth'; and the second answered, 'Therefore will I visit their iniquities with a rod, and their sins with stripes'; and the third exclaimed, 'My mercy I will not remove from him, nor by my truth will I hurt him, and I will have mercy on the poor and the needy.'"

After a further colloquy among the voices, followed by a terrible cry, which seemed to be uttered by the three together, and which threatened awful vengeance unless men would repent in time, he saw a vision of angels, who went through the world offering to men white garments and red crosses, which some accepted and others spurned, while some again not only spurned them but persuaded others to do the like. These, he explains, are "the tepid," men puffed up with pride, who deride the boon which is offered them, and hinder others from accepting it. It is not necessary to particularise the details which follow. Those who have clad themselves in the white robes, and who hold the red crosses, become the recipients of that divine mercy which, during and after the storm of tribulation, is to be extended to the faithful remnant of a corrupt people.[1] The practical lesson of the vision for Fra Girolamo himself, as communicated to him by the supposed divine voice, was that he should earnestly pray God to inspire men with His fear (ut suum timorem in terram mitteret), and to give to His Church good pastors and preachers who would feed their flocks and not themselves.

[1] White robes and red crosses were to be, hereafter, the distinguishing marks of the followers of Fra Girolamo in their public processions and similar functions, of which something has, by anticipation, already been said.

In the following year (1493) Fra Girolamo preached the Lent not at Florence but at Bologna. To judge from a letter written by him at the time to his brethren at S. Marco, who were distressed at the long absence of their Prior, he does not seem to have been altogether satisfied with his success there; and Burlamacchi relates that his sermons were at first not well attended, and that he was esteemed "a simple man, good enough for women."[1] For one woman at least he showed himself a match. The wife of Giovanni Bentivoglio, the despotic ruler of the city, attended the lenten course, but had the bad taste habitually to arrive after the commencement of the sermon. At first the preacher contented himself with interrupting his discourse until the great lady had taken her seat, in the hopes that the marked pause would be sufficient to make her ashamed of her bad manners. Seeing, however, that this had no effect, he admonished the ladies in general terms to arrive punctually, so as not to distract the attention of the audience. But again to no purpose. The wife of so distinguished a man, and so powerful a ruffian, as the despot of Bologna, was not disposed to take to herself any such general admonition. He therefore one day addressed her individually from the pulpit, reminding her that she would please God better, and himself also, if she would be good enough to come in time. The only result was that she persevered in her obstinacy, and at last one day, as she swept into the church with her retinue, he cried aloud: "See how the devil comes to disturb the word of God!" Whereupon she despatched two of her attendants with orders to slay him there and then in the pulpit. But their courage failed them; and, when a little later, she sent two others on a like errand to the convent of S. Domenico, Savonarola received them with such gentle dignity that they could only stammer out that their mistress had sent them to assure him of her willingness to serve him if ever he should need her assistance.

[1] The letter above referred to is given in full by Quétif, ii. 99 *sqq*. It is full of beautiful and valuable spiritual counsels, fervent exhortations to patience, perseverance in prayer, the avoidance of idleness, of dissensions, and of "tepidity." The brethren are exhorted not to oppose the work which he has in hand, of which he has spoken freely to them, but can speak only in a guarded manner where he now is. His earnest desire to be once more among them is expressed with great tenderness: "Io mi ricordo sempre della vostra dolce charita, et spesso ne ragiono con Fra Basilio diletto mio figliuolo et unamine vostro fratello. . . . Stiamo molto solitarii come due tortorine, che aspettano che torni la primavera, per poter tornare nei luoghi caldi," etc. (pp. 103-4).

Such is the tale as told by Burlamacchi, and in the *Vita Latina*.[1] If we might hazard a conjecture it would be (1) that the somewhat intemperate words of the preacher have been distorted and exaggerated; and (2) that it was Madonna Bentivoglio herself who was at last overcome by the courageous firmness of the preacher; and that the message which her attendants delivered at the convent of S. Domenico was the message which they had been bidden to carry.

Burlamacchi adds, however, that in his concluding sermon, Fra Girolamo publicly announced that he would set out on foot that afternoon for Florence, and would pass the night at Pianoro; that if any one had anything to say to him, they would do well to come before his departure; that, nevertheless, he should die, not at Bologna, but elsewhere.[2] It must be admitted that these words, if only they have been correctly reported, contain an unmistakable allusion to some attempt, actual or threatened, upon his life.[3]

It was in this same year, 1493, that Fra Girolamo successfully carried out a project which lay very near his heart, which was intended to serve as the first step in a large and comprehensive plan of reform, but which, unfortunately, involved him, within a comparatively short interval of time, in very serious difficulties. Savonarola, as has been seen, was deeply impressed with the conviction that if the Church was indeed to be renovated, the work of spiritual renewal must begin with the clergy, and in particular with the religious orders. Now, so long as he was merely Prior of S. Marco, it was not in his power to take this work in hand, even as it concerned his own subjects, with the freedom and vigour which seemed to him to be necessary to ensure permanent success. The convent of S. Marco, with certain other houses of the Order of

[1] Burlamacchi, pp. 35, 36; Villari, i. 170 *sqq.*

[2] Burlamacchi, *loc. cit.* It is curious to find in the *Annales Bononienses* of Fra H. Burselli (Muratori, *Scriptores*, xxiii. 911) the record of a murder perpetrated, presumably at the instance of Bentivoglio, by four men in masks, on the first day of this very Lent.

[3] In the letter above referred to, Savonarola bids his correspondents pray that he may have right to know whether, after the conclusion of the lenten sermons, he ought to proceed to Venice to the chapter of the Order, which was to be held there. A letter written from Venice to Fra Battista da Firenze, vicar or sub-prior of S. Marco, and published by Cappelli (n. 1), is, we think, to be referred to this time, however the date 1492 (for which we would read 1493) is to be explained. The chronological question is discussed by Villari (i. 167 *sqq.*), who arrives at a different conclusion. The point is of no serious importance.

Friars Preachers, of the stricter observance, in Tuscany, was subject to the Vicar of Lombardy;[1] but if only a separation could be effected, it might be possible to improve the state of religious discipline in these Tuscan houses, or of so many of them as might wish to associate themselves with S. Marco. And, indeed, it is evident that so long as Fra Girolamo was liable, at any moment, to be sent by his superiors to reside at Venice or Bologna or elsewhere, he could not feel any confidence that his term of government at S. Marco would be sufficiently prolonged to enable him to carry out any durable scheme of internal reformation.

At the same time, we must express our dissent from a twofold conjecture with reference to this matter which has been somewhat incautiously put forth by Villari. He assumes, without proof, that Savonarola's mission to Bologna was due to the machinations of Piero de' Medici, and also that it was this mission which suggested to him the project of separation. The only ground, so far as we can gather from the extant evidence, for believing that Piero was the moving cause of the Bolognese mission is, that he is supposed to have been desirous that Fra Mariano should again preach the Lent at Florence in 1493.[2] But this latter supposition seems to be as ill-grounded as the conclusion which Villari has ventured to draw from it. The facts, as revealed by a correspondence published by Cappelli, are briefly these: In a letter, dated 14th January 1493, Ercole d'Este informs Manfredi, his envoy at Florence, that he has written to the Pope, begging him to command Mariano to preach the Lent at Ferrara, but that Mariano has excused himself on the ground that Piero de' Medici already held his promise that he would preach at Florence.[3] D'Este accordingly instructs Manfredi to approach Piero on the subject, and it transpires that Piero is quite willing to oblige the Duke;[4] being, in all probability, profoundly indifferent whether Mariano preached at Florence or elsewhere. Accordingly, della Barba is driven to find some other

[1] Or, more strictly speaking, of "the Congregation of Lombardy," the meaning of which appellation will presently appear.

[2] "Sembra che Piero de' Medici . . . annoiatosi di questo predicatore troppo popolare . . . riuscisse . . . a farlo allontanar da Firenze, dove avea adesso richiamato il Gennazzano a predicare" (Villari, i. 169). The writer adds in a note: "Ciò risulta dai documenti che publicò il Cappelli" (pp. 28-30).

[3] Cappelli, n. 7.

[4] D'Este to Manfredi, 29th January; d'Este to Mariano, same date (Cappelli, nn. 8, 9).

excuse for holding fast to his Florentine pulpit. Manfredi, the Duke's ambassador, is fairly annoyed. After so many negotiations ("tante et gagliarde scaramuzze" in his expressive but untranslatable phrase) he can get nothing out of Master Mariano except that it is impossible for him to go to Ferrara.[1] Mariano, on his part, cannot understand the Duke's displeasure, "essendo necessitato per sue facende et interesso proprio."[2] "His own affairs," then, "and his own interests," and not his promise to Piero were, after all, the reason why he could not, or would not, comply with the request of the Duke.[3] There is, in fact, not a scrap of evidence to show that Piero de' Medici was at this time actively hostile to Savonarola. On the contrary, the documents which Villari himself has published show, as will presently appear, that he gave his support, doubtless from no very exalted motive, to Fra Girolamo's efforts to obtain the separation of S. Marco from the Lombard Congregation.

Nor again can it be maintained that the order to preach the Lent at Bologna was the occasion of these efforts. We have the authority, not merely of Burlamacchi, but of Savonarola himself, for the statement that, during a period of six or seven months, prayers had been daily offered by the community of S. Marco for the success of the negotiations.[4] And this would almost certainly carry us back to an earlier date than the communication of the command to preach at Bologna. Moreover, as appears from Fra Girolamo's account of the matter, the project had been entertained long before these special public prayers had been undertaken by the community.[5]

But to return to the negotiations themselves. That the project was not of the nature of a mere innovation, and that it had the cordial support of Fra Girolamo's brethren, and was not, as his enemies afterwards pretended, a crafty device of personal ambition, is made sufficiently clear by a formal memorial which was drawn up, on 25th May 1493, for presentation to the Pope. This document cannot indeed have been the first petition on the subject, for it is

[1] Manfredi to d'Este, 3rd February (Cappelli, n. 11).

[2] Same to same, 14th February (Cappelli, n. 12).

[3] *Cf.* Cosci, pp. 288-89.

[4] "Imperochè in sei mesi cinque volte il dì i Frati tutti si ragunavano all' oratione uniti insieme," etc. (Burlamacchi, p. 55). Lest it should be thought that Burlamacchi has here exaggerated the facts, Savonarola himself speaks of these prayers as having been made by the community six or seven times daily for the space of seven months (Savonarola to an Abbess at Ferrara, 10th September 1493; Villari, i. Append. p. lv.).

[5] *Ibid.*, p. liv.

dated three days later than the very Brief which it was designed to obtain. But the loss of the earlier petition, which seems to be no longer extant, is of the less consequence because the later document contains a very full statement of the case for separation. It has seemed to us to be of sufficient interest to deserve reproduction here in a compendious summary. After the date, and a list of the names of the brethren present on the occasion, who are stated to have been duly summoned to the chapter-house at the sound of the bell, and by command of the Prior, the memorial proceeds:—

The-above named brethren—who declare themselves to be not merely a two-thirds majority, but the entire number of the professed members of the convent now within its walls—being thus duly assembled, the aforesaid Prior, Fra Hieronymo Savonarola of Ferrara, addressed them in a clear voice, so as to be understood by all, to the following effect:—

"Whereas the constitutions of the Order of Preachers prescribe that the Provinces of the Order should be kept distinct, nevertheless, by reason of the fewness of its members, our Convent of S. Marco was sometime since united to the Congregation of Lombardy.[1] Subsequently, at the request of the Prior and Fathers, it was again separated therefrom; but for a second time, for the same reason as before, it was not indeed formally united with, but "commended" to, the same Congregation, being once more placed under obedience to its superiors.[2] But now the number of Fathers and Brothers has so greatly increased that the convent may much more suitably be put on its proper footing, and be ruled by its own superiors, independently of the Province of Lombardy. We had therefore determined to present a petition to this effect to our lord the Pope, to the end that we might for the future live and serve God in peace, and in all love and charity.

"But because, as we learn, it has been represented to the Cardinal our Protector, that this is the wish of only a few of us, it has seemed well to

[1] This was in 1451. The occasion of the union was the plague which had devastated Italy in 1448 (Marchese, *Sunto Storico*, p. 93). It might, indeed, with some show of justice have been objected that this appeal to antiquity, and to the constitutions of the Friars Preachers, was a piece of special pleading. For at the time when the "stricter observance" was instituted by B. Raymund of Capua and B. Giovanni Dominici, the reformed houses in Italy (to whatever Province of the Order they might have belonged) had been united in a single "Congregation" (not "Province,") which, from the circumstance that most of these reformed houses were in northern Italy, bore the name of the Congregation of Lombardy. And, in particular, the Convent of S. Marco had been from its foundation a member of this Lombard Congregation (*Annali del Convento di S. Caterina*, p. 605; *cf.* Marchese, *Sunto Storico*, p. 35). At what precise date the first separation was effected we are unable to state.

[2] The second separation took place in 1469, and the reunion, by way of commendation," in 1474 (Marchese, *ibid.*, p. 93).

seek a definite expression of opinion from all and each of those who have a voice in the matter, that thus our petition may have the greater force."

Accordingly, the matter having been fully discussed in chapter, the Brethren were unanimously of opinion that the petition for a separation be made in accordance with the words of our Prior.

Moreover, the Prior aforesaid did a second time on the same day propose the same matter in the same form to the brethren in chapter assembled, to the end that they might more fully deliberate thereupon. And after this second discussion they unanimously declared their adhesion to the resolution already arrived at.

Finally, after yet a third discussion in chapter, the Prior requested the professed brethren, singly and apart, and in silence, to express in writing their vote or opinion on the matters aforesaid.

Here follow the signatures, each with a few words appended. One says that he greatly desires the separation; another that he has always desired it; a third wishes that he had a hundred votes to give for it; others protest that they wish it "for the good of religion," or "for the honour of God," or that they give their votes freely and not out of fear of the Prior, or at his persuasion. Lastly, one of the signatories wishes for the separation "that he may serve God more freely."

All is duly attested by public notaries, and sealed with the seal of the city.[1]

The memorial, though obviously an *ex parte* statement, sufficiently sets forth the state of the case as represented by the Prior and community of S. Marco from an historical and constitutional point of view. But we gain a better insight into the inner motives which actuated Savonarola in this matter from a long letter on the whole subject which he addressed, in the autumn of 1493, to the Lady Abbess of a convent of nuns at Ferrara. We summarise it here, out of its chronological order, because, though written later, it has reference to the events of the time with which we are here concerned:[2]—

10*th September* 1493; Savonarola to "una Badessa di Ferrara."—Honoured Mother—Your letter has given me great pleasure, and your kind admonition proceeds, as I know, from a sincere zeal, and I accept it as a sign of your true charity towards me (che voi mi amate in verità senza dissimulazione). I wish I could speak with you in person, for I feel sure that I could satisfy you concerning our affairs. In the meanwhile (since you hear reports to our disadvantage) suspend your judgment, and await the issue of events. Remember our Lord's words: "By their fruits ye shall know them."

[1] Gherardi, pp. 42-52.

[2] Villari, i. Append. pp. lii. *sqq.*

This separation from the Lombard Congregation is a thing which *per se* might be either good or bad (according to circumstances); and therefore it is a matter on which a hasty judgment should not be formed. In the case of a spiritual body or corporation the amputation of a limb may be good or bad. It is good if the rest of the body be corrupt, that the healthy member be not likewise corrupted; bad if the rest of the body be thoroughly sound, sound internally as well as in outward appearance. I do not say that the Congregation of Lombardy is unsound; but this I do say, that if it be truly sound, and we unsound, then the result of our separation ought to be that the amputated member, *i.e.* ourselves, should show signs of corruption.[1] But if on the contrary the Congregation be sound only in appearance, and not inwardly, then the detached member will escape from being corrupted by the body, and will become healthy, and grow by the grace of God. Therefore, I say, await the result.

It is quite a mistake to say that we have entered upon a new mode of life. A return to the principles and example of our saintly predecessors is not the adoption of a new mode of life. To build poor convents; to wear a rough and old and patched habit; to eat and drink within the limits of sobriety as determined by the saints; to live in a poor cell, bare of superfluities; to cultivate silence and solitude; to separate oneself from the world, and give oneself to contemplation—these are not innovations. But for mendicants to build themselves palaces with marble columns; to live in a cell handsome enough for a prince; to hold possessions contrary to the profession of one's Order . . . to wear rich cloth in place of rough serge (vestirsi non di panno più vile ma più vano); to pray little; to wander hither and thither; to wish to be poor and at the same time to want for nothing—these things are indeed innovations, and are a stumbling-block to souls. Our first fathers lived in one fashion, our modern fathers live in another. Let every one make his choice between the old style and the new. Our way of life, instead of giving scandal here in Florence, on the contrary gives great edification. *And yet you must know that we have hardly begun to carry out what we intend.* Hitherto we have made comparatively little change in our former way of life, but with the help of your prayers and advice we hope, little by little, to introduce a stricter observance.

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[1] The logic of this paragraph strikes us as not merely a little faulty but also a little ill-natured. It is, in fact, nothing short of an absurdity to say that because the division of a parish, diocese, congregation, or the like issues in happy results for one of the parts, therefore the other part must be, or must have been, in an unsound state. Nor can we read, with any feeling of satisfaction, Savonarola's invitation to his friends and followers to think ill of their neighbours even when externally there appears no manifest fault. This is only one of many such instances. In the days of his later conflicts he was wont to urge that the good men were all on his side. And when it was urged that there were also good men on the other side, his reply was that though perhaps good in appearance they were inwardly corrupt. He was fond of denouncing Pharisaism, but, if we are not mistaken, there was an element of unconscious Pharisaism in his own judgments of men.

Here follows a passage—to which we have already had occasion to refer—which Fra Girolamo tells how the step has not been taken without mature and serious consideration ; and how prayers for light and guidance have been offered during a long period, not merely within the walls of S. Marco but throughout the city and elsewhere ; and how the gravest Fathers have assured him of their conviction that God Himself had inspired him with this design, and that it was his duty to carry it into execution without further delay.

It is, then, he urges, incredible that so many servants of God, united in one common bond of charity, having the honour of God and the good of souls alone in view, should, after so many prayers, nevertheless be deceived. If there is an appearance of singularity in their mode of life, the reason is because the world is sunk in darkness, and every class and condition of men, and of women too, has become depraved.

It is time, it is time, it is indeed time to adopt a singular mode of life, because the world has grown tepid, so that God may well say, in the words of the Apocalypse : "I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth." It is indeed time to reform ourselves and to contemn the judgments of men : "For all men are liars." It is time to wage war against false and tepid brethren. What the Apostle says is undoubtedly true : "All they that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecutions." The tepid have not to endure many persecutions, because the devil does not persecute his own ; but the fervent meet with fierce opposition because they are themselves opposed to Satan. The cause of our Lord cannot succeed but by war (non surgono senza guerra). Therefore, when you live well, and yet meet with no contradiction, you ought to fear, for it is not God's way to leave His servants here without war.

The letter concludes with an earnest encouragement not to yield to pusillanimity, and with an equally earnest petition for intercessory prayer. One sentence in particular deserves to be specially noted :—

"It would be," he says, "a supremely foolish thing for me to entertain any such solicitude as to say : 'If I were to die, who would carry on and observe the reform?' *As if, forsooth, God had need of my help.*"

We cannot help thinking that if Fra Girolamo had throughout his career been more consistently true to the principle expressed in these words, his great work for God would have been more far-reaching and more perdurable in its results. Was it not precisely because he allowed himself to believe that his presence in Florence, and his eloquence in the pulpit, *were* necessary to the promotion of God's cause, that he allowed himself to be betrayed into an opposition to lawful

authority which—however it may have been excused by his good faith—was objectively incapable of justification? But this is a matter to which we shall, of course, have occasion to return in the sequel.

The affair of the petition quickly became a matter of public and even of political interest. It was opposed, not merely by the superiors of the Lombard Congregation, but also by Lodovico Sforza, Duke of Milan, d'Este of Ferrara, Bentivoglio of Bologna, the Venetian Signory, and even by the King of Naples and the Duke of Calabria.[1] On the other hand, as appears from contemporary documents, it was warmly seconded by the Florentine Signory and by Filippo Valori, their representative in Rome.[2] Even Piero de' Medici himself wrote a letter in support of the brethren of S. Marco, and their cause was favoured by his brother, the Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici, who afterwards became Pope Leo X. It was still more effectively promoted by the Cardinal Protector of the Order, Oliviero Caraffa, Archbishop of Naples. Villari expresses some surprise that Piero should have interested himself in the matter, and the more so because, as has been said, he is of opinion that Savonarola's mission to Bologna was not improbably due to de' Medici's desire to be rid, at least for a time, of the troublesome Friar. But we have already given our reasons for doubting whether Piero had anything whatever to do with the sending of Fra Girolamo to Bologna; and the simplest explanation of the support which he gave to the project of separation, and of the corresponding opposition of Lodovico Sforza and the Milanese, appears to us to be that a patriotic sentiment of a not very enlightened kind was in each case successfully invoked. The politicians of those days were not likely to trouble themselves about the intrinsic merits of the case for or against the Florentine convent, or to take account of the ultimate issues of a step which, in its purely religious aspect, did not at all concern them.

The following letter of the Signory to Cardinal Caraffa, of which we give the substance, sufficiently explains itself:—

8th May 1493; The Signory to Caraffa.[3]—This is to inform you that Fra Alexandro Rinuccini and Fra Domenico da Pescia, religious of our

[1] Burlamacchi, p. 56.

[2] The Ten to Valori, 10th May and 7th June; the same to Caraffa, 10th May (Villari, i. Append. pp. xl.-xlii.). These letters confirm the account of the matter given by Cinozzi (p. 11) and Burlamacchi (*loc. cit.*). Filippo Valori was nephew to Francesco, Savonarola's chief political supporter.

[3] Villari, i. Append. p. xlvi. The letter is undated, but in the collection of Florentine State papers it is placed between two others written respectively

convent of S. Marco, have set out for Rome, to confer with you, bearing commendatory letters from the Cardinal of Florence (Giovanni de' Medici) and from his brother Piero. And although we are well aware that those letters will have very great weight with you, yet we on our own account do recommend these friars to you to the utmost of our power (iterum atque iterum). We believe that the cause which they have in hand is one which concerns not merely the good of the Convent, but the interests of the whole Church (universae Religioni utilem honorificamque multis rationibus futuram).[1] If you support their petition you will give the greatest pleasure to the whole people of Florence, for we have learned greatly to love this convent, both for the holy manner of life which therein prevails, and for the learning which distinguishes it.

Notwithstanding these strong recommendations, Rinuccini and da Pescia found, on their arrival in Rome, that it would prove no easy task to carry their point. Indeed, so powerful was the opposition that it seemed likely to prove entirely victorious, when a bold act of the Cardinal Protector decided the matter in favour of the petitioners. On 22nd May, a consistory had been held, at the conclusion of which the Pope dismissed the cardinals, declaring that on that day he would sign no Brief. Caraffa, however, who knew his man, and was well aware that Alexander VI. had no deep-seated convictions on the matter in hand, remained behind when the rest departed, and producing a form of Brief which he had already prepared, begged the Pope to sign it. Alexander demurred, but—as the story is told by Burlamacchi—offered no resistance when Caraffa took his signet ring from his finger and himself affixed the Papal seal to the document. As Caraffa left the palace, rejoicing in his success, he met the envoys of the opposing party on their way to the Pope. Alexander, however, told them that if they had come a few minutes sooner they might have been heard, but that now what was done was done and should not be undone to please them.[2]

The Brief itself is not specially remarkable. It sets forth, rather more explicitly than the petition of the brethren, that an unauthorised attempt has been made to subject the convent of S. Marco more fully and unreservedly to the Vicar of Lombardy than

on 7th and 8th May (Villari, *loc. cit.*). This and several other letters on the same subject are from the hand of the learned Bartolommeo Scala, at that time First Secretary to the Republic. He was a personal friend and supporter of Fra Girolamo, in whose favour he subsequently wrote an apologetic tract (Villari).

[1] We do not think that "Religio" here means (as it sometimes does) a religious order, but rather the Christian religion in general, or, in the concrete, the Church.

[2] Burlamacchi, pp. 56-57.

was contemplated when the said convent was "commended" to the Lombard Congregation; but declares that from henceforth the community of S. Marco is entirely withdrawn from the government of the superiors of Lombardy, and is placed under the immediate jurisdiction of the General of the Order, to whom it belongs to confirm the election of the Prior, who is to be chosen yearly. The privilege thus granted is to be understood to extend to members of the convent who for the time being may be absent therefrom, and also to members of other convents who may be actually inmates of S. Marco, provided that the community be willing to accept them as brethren, and that they do not themselves wish to return to the houses from which they may have come. Should they, however, desire to return to their own houses, they may do so without the permission of the Prior of S. Marco.[1]

Closely connected with this Brief, which was received at S. Marco on 25th May, is a curious document, drawn up on the following day, of which we give the substance below. It may fitly be introduced by the summary of a letter under cover of which it was despatched to Piero de' Medici:—

26*th May* 1493; Jacopo Salviati to Piero de' Medici.[2]—I have visited S. Marco with a view to the settlement of this business ("questa cosa" *i.e.* the affair of the separation) in company with a representative of the Congregation (of Lombardy), and they have arrived at an agreement (compositione), of the terms whereof I enclose a copy. By virtue of it, as you will see, you are made the referee in the event of any dispute arising.[3] Be kind enough to send a reply by the bearer, so that everything may be finally settled to-morrow morning. And although the parties concerned approve the terms of the agreement, they will approve them much more fully if they understand that the matter proceeds from you; because both parties in fact wish just what you wish (ognuno di loro in effecto vuole quello che vuoi tu) and it seems impossible that anything could be better managed than you have managed this business (nè pare che si possa procedere . . . meglio in cosa nessuna, quanto hai facto tu in questa opera).

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[1] Villari, i. Append. pp. xlii. *sqq.*

[2] Villari, i. Append. p. xliv.

[3] So we understand the words: "La quale (convenzione) mi pare apunto secondo l'intento tuo . . . *per chi il sì et il no d'ogni conclusione resta in te apunto*, come vedrai." Inasmuch as the compact does not mention Piero except in its superscription (which Villari unwarrantably—as it seems to us—has separated from the text) we must understand this superscription ("Expediatur Breve," etc.) as making him official arbiter.

Let [a copy of] the Brief be executed and sealed, and placed in the hands of Piero de' Medici.

The Congregation of Lombardy shall continue to hold to the convent of S. Marco at Florence the same relations which it held previously to the recent Brief (restet . . . in eo esse in quo erat ante impetratum Breve), but with this condition, that no act of the superiors of Lombardy having reference to the said convent shall be held to derogate, or to have been intended to derogate, from the Brief, or from the rights of the convent or its members. Let this be observed, faithfully and without cavil, on both sides."[1]

Cosci, not without some show of reason, regards this strange compact as a piece of elaborate futility, a form of concession which concedes nothing, and which must have been drawn up purely *honoris causâ*, and as a salve for the wounded feelings, or wounded pride, of the Lombards.[2] But we find it difficult to believe that Salviati, and Piero his employer, would have troubled themselves about a mere interchange of complimentary phrases between the

[1] The terms of the document are sufficiently obscure to make it desirable to give the full text here :—

"Expediatur Breve et sigillatum deponatur in manus Petri de Medicis. Congregatio Lombardiae restet, quoad Conventum Sancti Marci de Florentia, in eo esse in quo erat ante impetratum Breve, cum hac conditione; quod per aliquem actum qui fieret per praepositos Congregationis Lombardiae in Conventu et seu (*sic*) in Fratribus Conventus Sancti Marci, quantuncunque contrarius Brevi non intelligatur praejudicatum dicto Brevi, et seu iuribus Conventus Sancti Marci quaesitis seu quaerendis per dictum Breve, si quando ad dictum Conventum seu ejus Fratres perveniret, quia fuisset eis exhibitum. Bona fide et sine cavillatione praedicta serventur per partes.

The obscurity lies in the words from "si quando" to "exhibitum." We understand them (*pace* Villari) to mean that any act of the Lombard Superiors which may happen to contravene the provisions of the Brief is not to be understood to have been done with intent to contravene it, simply on the ground that the Brief has been shown to them (*i.e.* to the Lombards). It might easily happen, that in any dispute that might subsequently arise, the Lombards should unwittingly contravene the Brief. They here disclaim all intention of so doing.

[2] Cosci writes : "Fu stipulata . . . una convenzione, nella quale si dichiarava . . che la Congregazione lombarda riteneva in Toscana la sua antica autorità (but the compact says nothing about "authority"), in tutto quello però che non contradicesse al breve dei 22. Era una astuzia, direi, diplomatica . . . ma un' astuzia richiesta dallo stato delle cose. *Infatti non significava nulla il dichiarare che alla Congregazione Lombarda rimaneva l'antica autorità sua* (which is just what the compact does not say), *quando il breve papale sottraeva affatto da ogni dipendenza della detta Congregazione il Convento di San Marco . . . Ma non conveniva spinger le cose tant' oltre da disprezzare anche i riguardi piu consueti*," etc. (pp. 290 *sqq.*). Cosci's mistake (as it seems to us) lies in his having read into the meaning of the compact a word ("authority") which is not there found, and which surely would have been found there if the intention had been to express the corresponding idea. Between two such bodies as the Congregation of Lombardy and the community of S. Marco there might, and would be, other relations besides that (now abrogated) of "authority," as we shall endeavour to explain above.

parties to what on Cosci's hypothesis would be a purely nugatory compact. The explanation which we would suggest is this: Apart from the matters legislated for in the Brief, it might happen that the Lombard Superiors had some outstanding claim, or might come to have a claim, against S. Marco, or *vice versâ*, notably as regarded the subjects of one or other obedience who might happen then or at any other time to be resident in a house of the rival jurisdiction, or again as regarded property or financial matters generally. And it can easily be understood that it might seem prudent to enter a *caveat* lest the Brief should be made an excuse for disregarding any such rights or claims as were left untouched by that decree.[1]

However this may be, there can be no question as to the deferential and almost obsequious tone of the short letter which Fra Girolamo addressed to Piero de' Medici on this occasion.

MAGNIFICO PIERO,—I have told these Fathers of ours (*i.e.* the Lombards) that my intention and that of my convent is to do all that your magnificence may desire . . . *for we are ever ready to carry out all your wishes* (ogni vostra voglia). I recommend to you *your convent.*

The words which we have italicised suggest a doubt, as we have already said, whether Fra Girolamo's attitude towards Piero's father was always quite so loftily independent as Burlamacchi represents it to have been. Or had his experience of the need in which he stood of the support of the secular power taught him to adopt an altered tone? And was there just possibly a tendency to excess both in his former aloofness and in his present readiness to carry out "all the wishes" of Messer Piero?

[1] Another possible explanation, which is adopted by Villari, is that the compact was concluded before the receipt of the Brief. In this case the words "si quando perveniret, etc.," would have to be understood of the Brief itself, and not (as we understand the matter) of the supposed act of the Lombard Superiors. But on the other hand, the superscription to which we have already referred seems to us to mean that an officially authenticated *copy* of the Brief is to be placed in the hands of Piero. If this is so, the Brief must have been already in the hands of the Prior of S. Marco.

CHAPTER VII

THE CONGREGATION OF S. MARCO—EXTENSION OF THE REFORM

ACCORDING to Burlamacchi, Savonarola had a narrow escape from the loss, so far as concerned himself individually, of whatever advantage he had hoped to gain from the Brief of separation. As a member, originally, of the Convent of S. Domenico at Bologna, he was—previously to the arrival of this Brief—personally subject to the Vicar of the Lombard Congregation; and before the Brief was issued a letter had been actually despatched by the Vicar, in which, under the severest ecclesiastical penalties, Fra Girolamo was commanded to leave Florence without delay. The letter, however, was addressed to the Prior of S. Domenico at Fiesole, of which that of S. Marco had been originally an offshoot, and thus it happened that, the Prior being absent from home, the order was not communicated to Fra Girolamo till a few hours after the Brief had already secured him against its effect.[1] Whether it was that notwithstanding the Brief the Lombard Fathers had already showed that they were not disposed to desist from their efforts to assert their authority over the brethren of S. Marco, or whether the measure was merely one of precaution, Fra Giovacchino Torriano, the General of the Order, issued a mandate, dated 18th June, by which the members of the Lombard Congregation were strictly forbidden to molest those of S. Marco wherever they might be (per mundum discurrentes in serviciis et beneficiis Religionis et Conventus); and it is prescribed that, if they should have occasion to visit Lombardy, they are to be received with all kindness and charity.[2] A second letter to the same effect, dated 16th November, shows that the General's apprehensions had not been unfounded, and that even stronger measures were needed to check vexatious and as it seemed to him

[1] Burlamacchi, pp. 57-58. He quaintly adds: "Così il Priore di Fiesole se ne tornò *colle trombe nel sacco.*"

[2] Gherardi, pp. 53-54.

mischievous interference in the affairs of the separated convent. In the meanwhile, however, a process had yet to be gone through before Fra Girolamo's position was altogether safe. It was necessary that he should be formally accepted and adopted as a member of the community in accordance with the terms of the Brief. On 24th June this was done, amid many demonstrations of joy, on the proposal of the sub-prior, Fra Battista Antonii.[1] And on the 27th of the same month Torriano, in order to put an end to all doubts or cavils, issued a letter in which Fra Girolamo Savonarola and Fra Domenico Buonvicino are declared "to have been and to be transferred to the Roman Province and to the Convent of S. Marco."[2]

The work of the reform of the convent was now earnestly taken in hand, its most noteworthy external feature being, as might have been expected from the letter to the Ferrarese Abbess, which has been quoted above, the enforcement of the observance of religious poverty, and the maintenance of a high standard of work. It had been a standing matter of controversy whether the practice of living solely on alms, without fixed revenue, as instituted by S. Dominic, could be maintained under changed conditions of society. Practically more than one attempt to restore the earlier discipline had failed. As the Pisan chronicler has it, the "stricter observance" had become a name rather than a reality. Fra Girolamo seems to have struck out a middle course. He renounced the temporal advantage of a fixed revenue, but would have his brethren to supplement by their earnings the alms that might be bestowed on the convent. P. Marchese writes:—

"He at once undid the work of Fathers Santi Schiattesi and Giuliano Lapaccini [the successors of S. Antonio in the government of S. Marco] . . . and renounced the possessions which . . . these two religious had obtained for the convent. But in order that the mendicant state of life might not give occasion or afford a pretext for idleness, he introduced into the new congregation the practice of manual labour, and especially the arts of design, to the end that those who by reason of natural incapacity, or any other cause, were unable to pursue the course

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[1] "Summo omnium consensu et miro gaudio exceptus est in Conventus hujus nativum filium et omnium communem patrem. Qua de re patres et fratres maximas grates Altissimo reddiderunt, qui sibi tantum patrem, vita et doctrina excellentissimum, sociare et copulare dignatus fuerit" (Ubaldini, *Cronaca di S. Marco*, *apud* Gherardi, p. 55).

[2] Gherardi, pp. 54-55.

of ecclesiastical studies, might at least spend their lives in work that was both ennobling and profitable. The result was, that this convent, and the others which became associated with it, produced a number of distinguished painters, sculptors, architects, modellers, brass-founders, and wood-carvers. . . .

"Three branches of study were carried on at S. Marco under the government of Fra Girolamo—scholastic theology, moral theology, and Holy Scripture. To the first only a very few were admitted. . . . Those who were less gifted he advised to apply themselves to the study of moral theology. But most earnestly he inculcated on all the study of Holy Scripture, and that this might be pursued with profit he made provision for the teaching of Hebrew, Syriac, and Chaldee. In this school, among many others, was trained the celebrated Santi Pagnini. . . . .

"One of the chief advantages which arose from this study of Holy Scripture was a revival of the ministry of preaching ; and the Dominican of S. Marco learned to expound in a series of discourses one or other of the books of the Bible, thus anticipating the decrees of the Council of Trent, which prescribed these public expositions of Holy Scripture.

"He introduced, moreover . . . a far greater austerity of life ; prayer was made continuously through many hours of the day and night, poverty in raiment and furniture was most strictly observed, fasting and other penitential practices were greatly increased.

"He himself was conspicuous among the brethren in the exercise of these virtues, and holding as he did the office of superior of all, was ever ready to take upon himself the most fatiguing and abject employments. . . .

"In a word, such was the charity and fervour of the community, that the author of the *Cedrus Libani* does not hesitate to speak of the Convent of S. Marco at this period as a new Eden."[1]

The number of the inmates increased within a few years from about 50 to nearly 300, and these included members of the noblest and most distinguished families in Florence. No less than six of the house of Strozzi, and five of the Bettini were among those on whom Savonarola bestowed the habit,[2] and the names of Medici, Gondi, Acciaiuoli, Tornabuoni, Vespucci, Salviati, are found in various lists of signatures and similar documents.[3] This, it need hardly be said, is a sign that the admirable example of the fervent community had won for them the esteem of all classes ; and the fact that so many families in the city counted one or more members within the walls

[1] Marchese, *Sunto Storico*, pp. 154 *sqq.* We have slightly abridged some portion of the passage quoted, which is of course based on the early biographies, and the contemporary records of the Order.

[2] *Annali di S. Caterina*, pp. 623-4.

[3] *Cf.* Marchese, p. 156.

of S. Marco powerfully helped to maintain friendly relations between the citizens and the reformed Friars. In the course of four years the convents of the Order at Fiesole, Pisa, and Prato, perhaps too that of S. Romano at Lucca,[1] were separated from the Lombard province and united with S. Marco, and a new priory, colonised from that centre, was established near Bibbiena. And in 1495 the associated houses were formally recognised as members of a new Congregation, of which Savonarola was elected the first Vicar-General.

These facts might be taken, and have been taken, as bearing witness to the high reputation which the Convent of S. Marco had attained under the government of Savonarola; nor have we any desire whatever to minimise their significance. At the same time it must be remembered that there is another side to the picture. In no case except that of Fiesole can the adhesion of the incorporated convents be said to have been spontaneous or even voluntary. At Pisa all, and at Prato nearly all, of the Friars who were already in possession were obliged to leave their convent to make room for a colony from S. Marco, and it is impossible not to recognise among the causes of the movement a strong desire on the part of the Florentine Signory to interfere in the religious affairs of the cities subject to her sway. And so it happened that an attempt to bring the Dominican house at Siena under allegiance to S. Marco signally failed, that a similar project in regard of the Convent at S. Gimignano was opportunely dropped, and that the success of the undertaking at Pisa was but ephemeral. The documents which we proceed to summarise or calendar, will sufficiently illustrate what has been said:—

10*th June* 1493; The Signory to Caraffa.[2]—We thank you heartily for having restored S. Marco to its former state of liberty, and we are all the more grateful for the way in which you have used your wisdom and authority to bring this matter more speedily to a successful issue. Moreover, the whole people [of Florence] shares our gratitude. We think, too, that you have done a thing very pleasing to God; for it cannot be doubted that religious observance will greatly flourish in this convent, of which the inmates live most holy lives.

15*th November;* Torriano to Savonarola.[3]—Our office requires that

[1] So says Perrens, p. 84, but does not give his authority. We know of no documents bearing on the subject.

[2] Villari, i. Append. p. xlvii,

[3] Gherardi, p. 56.

we should move about from place to place ; wherefore, as many things may happen which would require the interposition of our authority, and it is undesirable that you should have to send hither and thither to seek me (ne vobis huc atque illuc post me sit cursitandum) we hereby confer upon you and your successors in the office of Prior the full power and authority of a Provincial.

16*th November;* Torriano to Fra Vincentio da Castronovo, Vicar of the Reformed Convents of the Congregation of Lombardy.[1]—The Brethren of S. Marco are in nowise to be molested or defamed, under pain of excommunication.

28*th November;* The Signory to Caraffa.[2]—You will be glad to know how excellent have been the results of your efforts on behalf of the Convent of S. Marco. Now all the brethren of S. Domenico at Fiesole desire to adopt the same work of life, and to be united to S. Marco. We beg you to expedite the matter.

Same date; The same to Ser Antonio da Colle.[3]—We beg you to use your efforts in favour of the union of S. Domenico at Fiesole with S. Marco.

17*th December;* The Signory to Caraffa.[4]—Some years ago the Convent of Santa Caterina at Pisa was, at the instance of Lorenzo de' Medici and others, united with the Congregation of Lombardy, and was at that time in great measure reformed by means of the brethren of S. Marco. But matters are again in a state of confusion, and the best remedy would seem to be that the said convent should be united to that of S. Marco, and the work of reform resumed. We pray you to use your good offices.

The reform mentioned in this letter had taken place only four or five years previously, viz. in 1488 or 1489. The annalist of the Convent describes in emphatic terms the state of laxity into which the community had fallen, and hints at worse evils, with the recital of which he will not offend modest ears.[5] Lorenzo de' Medici had used his influence with Innocent VIII. to procure a Brief whereby S. Caterina was placed under obedience to the Lombard Congregation ; whereupon a colony of some twenty friars from S. Marco at Florence had

[1] Gherardi, p. 57.

[2] Gherardi, p. 58.

[3] Gherardi, p. 59. Da Colle was at this time the Florentine ambassador in Rome.

[4] Villari, i. Append. p. xlvii.

[5] The laxity, so far as it is explicitly described, was in the matter of poverty. "Cetera taceo," writes the annalist, "quae castas autes offensura certo certius scio." And he adds : "Nec hoc huic Conventui tantum accidise quis suspicetur : toti fere Ordini communis fuit hic morbus, et multis adhuc provinciis et Conventibus eo anno quo hæc scribo MDL, hoc malum serpit" (*Annali del Convento di S. Caterina*, p. 604).

been established there, the former inmates—with the exception of a few who were willing to accept the reform—being dispersed to various other houses of the Order.[1]

Same date; The Signory to da Colle.[2]—We charge you to promote the union of the Pisan convent with that of S. Marco. While urging this matter, try also to obtain permission for the houses at Fiesole and San Gimignano to enter into a similiar union.

11th January 1494; Same to same.[3]—It now seems best, "per buono rispecto et per maggiore facilità," to desist from pushing the cause of the convent at San Gimignano. Therefore, confine your efforts to those of Fiesole and Pisa.

7th April; Same to same.[4]—You are already aware how earnestly the whole city desires that the convents of Fiesole and Pisa may be allowed freely to separate themselves from the Lombard Congregation, after the manner of our own S. Marco; and as the Cardinal of Naples carried through the former business, we charge you to urge him to use his good offices in this matter also.

20th April; Same to same.[5]—We have received a letter altogether contrary to our hopes and expectations; but cannot persuade ourselves that the Pope and the Cardinal will continue to refuse what we ask. Wherefore, mindful of the words of the Gospel: "Ask and ye shall receive," we are determined to urge our petition once more. We are confident that the boon which we seek will tend to the splendour of divine worship (perchè il culto divino ne sarà più ornato). The Fathers of Lombardy have no just ground for resentment, because every one, and most of all those who make profession of religious life, ought to rejoice at whatever promotes the glory of God. Let the Cardinal be more fully informed about the matter, and he will surely grant us this favour.

1st May; Fra Francesco Salviati (Prior of Fiesole) to Savonarola.[6]—Our affair in Rome progresses on the whole favourably. Our Cardinal Protector is unwilling to grant us what we ask except under conditions (patti) which have been arranged with the ambassadors, and of which I send you a copy. For my part, I wish for no conditions or form of agreement with the Lombard Fathers except that we should live in mutual charity.

Meanwhile, the superiors of Lombardy have been forbidden to

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[1] *Annali*, pp. 605-6.

[2] Gherardi, p. 59.

[3] Gherardi, p. 60.

[4] Gherardi, *ibid.*

[5] S. Gimignano was in the Sienese territory, and Siena would have none of the reform.

[6] Villari, p. xlviii.

[7] Gherardi, p. 60. The letter is written from Rome, whither Salviati had gone to plead the cause of his convent.

remove from Pisa any of the brethren who may be natives of that city, or of Florence, or to exercise any kind of jurisdiction or authority over our house at Fiesole until this matter has been settled. His Holiness has given you permission by word of mouth to build a new convent.

As for me, I am content to abide by your judgment in all things (stare secondo che pare a tutti voi), and I am ready to lay down my life for my convent, as Jesus Christ laid down His for me.

15th May; The Signory to Caraffa.[1]—We beg you to arrange for the unconditional separation of the houses at Fiesole and Pisa.[2]

27th May; Torriano to Savonarola.[3]—We hereby give you permission to send two of your subjects to Rome at any time, to treat of the affairs of your convent.

2nd June; The Signory to Caraffa.[4]—We thank you for the frankness with which you explain to us the difficulties which cause this affair to drag on; and we trust to your kindness and your wisdom to overcome these obstacles.

Same date; The Signory to Messer Puccio Pucci.—We send a copy of our letter to Caraffa, and also a memorandum of replies to the objections raised by him. Pray forward the matter to the best of your ability.[5]

This concludes the series of letters, so far as these letters have hitherto been published, relative to the affair of the convents at Fiesole and Pisa. Their actual union with S. Marco was not finally effected till August, 1494;[6] and this in a very different fashion, and with very different results, as regards the one and the other. There can be no doubt that the inmates of S. Domenico at Fiesole cordially desired the union, and the closest relationship was subsequently maintained between this house and S. Marco. At Pisa, as has already been said, it was far otherwise. The Signory had begged, on behalf of the convent of S. Caterina in that city, that it might be allowed "freely" to unite itself with the Florentine House. But they had at the same time allowed another motive for their action to appear, besides the assumed desire to make matters easy for the Pisan friars. "Because this convent is at Pisa," they

[1] Gherardi, p. 62.

[2] "Nullis additis conditionibus"; in allusion to the "patti" of which Salviati speaks in his letter of 1st May.

[3] Gherardi, p. 63.

[4] Gherardi, *ibid.*

[5] Gherardi, p. 64.

[6] Ubaldini, *Cronaca*, *apud* Gherardi, p. 58; *Annali di S. Caterina*, pp. 609 *sqq.*

had said, "we greatly desire that it should be reformed by our Florentines."[1] "Our Florentines," as has been seen, had already made one attempt to effect a reform at S. Caterina by the drastic measure of displacing the former inmates by a colony from their own body. Some of these colonists, however, and among them Fra Domenico da Pescia and Fra Salvestor Maruffi, who afterwards suffered death with Savonarola, had in the meanwhile returned to S. Marco.[2]

What actually happened on the present occasion shall be told in the words of the Annals of the Convent of S. Caterina at Pisa, the writer of which is, it should be observed, a declared admirer of Fra Girolamo.

"On the Festival of the Assumption, 1495 [*stylo Pisano; i.e.* 1494] there came to the convent, from Florence, Fra Hieronymo Savonarola . . . with some of his brethren and certain Florentine citizens, among whom was Filippo Pandolfino, Prefect of the city [*i.e.* Gonfaloniere of Florence?]. There in the presence of all, in chapter assembled, he read the papal Brief. Hieronymo was the founder of the Congregation [of S. Marco], and was at that time the Vicar-General thereof, being the first to hold that dignity. To him were already subject the convents of Fiesole and of S. Marco at Florence, and to these, on this day, our house was aggregated (tertius iis hac die additus est noster). Before the reading of the Pope's letter, the question was asked whether any of the brethren here resident wished to become members of the new Congregation. *They were forty-four in number, of whom (only) four elected to remain* [under the new *régime*]. These were Fra Stephano da Codiponte, Fra Domenico . . . Fra Martino Buonconti . . . and Fra Simpliciano, a lay brother (conversus), *who was on his deathbed, having already received extreme unction. The rest preferred to return to Lombardy.* The Prior was relieved of his office, and went away with them. *Then Fra Hieronymo assigned new brethren to the convent*, of whom twenty-two were choir brothers (vocales); and the convent seemed to be entirely changed (novusque visus est conventus).

"This state of things, however, was not of long duration. For the city of Pisa, which for more than eighty years had enjoyed undisturbed peace under the dominion of Florence, taking occasion from the expedition of Charles, King of the French . . . and attracted by the pleasant name of liberty, revolted from the Florentines. And because nearly all the brethren were Florentines they were regarded with suspicion by the newly established Republic. Accordingly, in January (1495) the Prior with his Tuscan companions returned to Florence,

[1] Letter of 7th April, *supra*.

[2] *Annali del Convento*, p. 607.

and the Lombard friars, authorised thereto by a papal Brief, resumed possession."[1]

The narrative hardly needs a word of commentary. It is sufficiently obvious with what degree of truth, or untruth, it had been alleged that the Pisan friars desired the permission "freely" to unite themselves with S. Marco. The whole business was one in which political motives had been used to forward, under false pretences, a project of reform which, however excellent in itself, could not justify the means adopted for its furtherance in this case. Within a very few months the whole scheme collapsed. On the revolt of Pisa, the Florentine friars were ordered to leave their new home, and the Lombard brethren regained possession.[2]

In one of the letters already summarised, Savonarola is informed that the Pope gives him permission to build a new convent. This permission probably had reference to the "Luogo," or Residence of S. Maria del Sasso near Bibbiena, a house which was already dependent on S. Marco. The two letters which follow make mention of this establishment, and incidentally show that the Pisan chronicler was anticipating matters when he described Savonarola as "Vicar-general," in August 1494. It was not till the end of May 1495 that he was elected to and confirmed in that office.

28*th May* 1495; Torriano to "the Prior and Brethren of the Convent of S. Marco at Florence of the Tuscan Congregation of the Roman Province of the Order of Preachers."[3]—Whereas the "Locus" of S. Maria del Sasso has been heretofore united with your Convent, and has hitherto possessed only the status of a Residence (pro Loco habitus fuit); and whereas now it has been enlarged and improved so as to be capable of containing a community such as is sufficient to form a convent, we hereby accept and adopt it as a convent (of the Order); and we give you full authority over it, and declare it to be a member of your Congregation.

Same date; Same to same.[4]—Whereas this year, by God's favour,

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[1] *Annali del Convento di S. Caterina, loc. cit.* Apparently the Pisans reckoned their year, like the Florentines, from 25th March, but, as compared with the common reckoning from 1st January, they counted from the previous March, the Florentines from the following March. The writer of the *Annali* alludes to the difference of reckoning on p. 606.

[2] *Annali*, p. 610.

[3] Gherardi, p. 65.

[4] Gherardi, p. 66.

you have for the first time held a capitular meeting (congregationem capitularem) wherein you have unanimously petitioned that the venerable Fra Hieronymo de Ferrara, notwithstanding his office of Prior, may be acknowledged and confirmed as your Vicar for the space of two years, it has seemed good to us to grant this your petition, and I hereby institute and confirm the said Fra Hieronymo as your Vicar, with the powers usually held by Provincials, and in particular that of deputing a Prior for the Convent of S. Maria del Sasso, etc.

We have purposely reproduced, in full, the designation of the persons to whom the first of the above letters was sent, because it serves to show that the "Tuscan Congregation" of reformed convents was already considered as in some sense forming a part of the "Roman Province" of the whole Order. The Order was divided into provinces; but a particular group of "reformed" houses belonging to one or more provinces might for special reasons be recognised as a "Congregation." There was no Tuscan "Province." There was, however, a "Tuscan Congregation," embracing the houses at Perugia, Cortona, Pistoia, and Lucca, but quite unconnected with Savonarola's reform at S. Marco and Fiesole.[1] Nevertheless, the houses of this Congregation are here implicitly grouped with S. Marco under a common designation. The Father-General was supreme over all "Provinces" and "Congregations." What has here been said will help to explain a later piece of legislation, with which, as will be seen, Savonarola refused to comply.

The following letters have reference to the affair of the convent of S. Domenico at Prato. This house had been founded in the thirteenth century, and in course of time had acquired considerable possessions. If we might judge from this document before us it would seem that considerable laxity had crept in; and to some extent this was no doubt the case, or else, it is to be presumed, the General would not have lent his aid to what was practically an act of forcible suppression. So far as the Florentine Signory was concerned, other motives besides those of disinterested zeal may probably have been at work, as in the case of Pisa.

18th January 1495 (*stylo Florentino, i.e.* 1496);[2] The Florentine Signory to the Gonfaloniere and Difensori of Prato.[3]—You have a house

[1] *Annali*, p. 608.

[2] These and other Florentine documents are dated, of course, according to the "Florentine Style," according to which the year began on 25th March. Henceforth we shall, without further remark, reduce the dates to "Roman style."

[3] Gherardi, p. 74.

of the Order of Preachers in your city, the inmates of which do not give that edification which is to be expected of religious men. We have talked over the matter with his Paternity the General of the Order, who has been good enough to visit us ; and he has given us good grounds to hope that he will proceed to a thorough reform of the convent, reducing it to a stricter observance, and sending those conventuals away.[1] He is going to Prato to take steps to this effect. We beg you to render him every assistance (adiuto, favore, braccio, una volta e più, e quante volte ne richiedessi). We are sure you will do this willingly, both for the honour of God and for your own spiritual good, which we have so much at heart. If any one should raise difficulties, bid him in our name not to meddle in such matters. If any one should pertinaciously resist, send him to us that we may know the reason why he attempts to hinder so good a work (che vogliamo intendere perchè, etc.).

Torriano on his arrival at Prato received the Gonfaloniere and Difensori in the convent, thanked them for their offer of help, of which he told them that he should avail himself in case of need.[2] The Florentine Signory, as the next letter will show, were determined that the Pratesi should have no excuse for neglecting their duty.

22*nd January* 1496; Same to same.[3]—Our fellow citizens and commissioners, Bernardo Ridolfi and Domenico Mazzinghi, are going with the Father-General to carry out our commands with reference to the reform of the Convent of S. Domenico. It is our wish and command that in this matter you should obey them as you would obey ourselves.[4]

The "conventuals" of Prato were no more ready to embrace the Tuscan reform than their brethren at Pisa had been. It was therefore necessary to make some provision for them, "ne vagi et dispersi mendicare cogantur," as the city chancellor expresses it. Accordingly, it was determined that two contiguous houses, with their gardens and appurtenances, which formed part of the possession of the convent, should be ceded by the brethren of S. Marco to the General, to be assigned by him to the dispossessed conventuals; and likewise that a sum of 125 "large golden florins" should be paid over to Torriano for the building of a church on the site selected.

All this is explained at great length in a form of agreement dated

[1] The members of houses which had not embraced the Raymundian reform were known as "Conventuals."

[2] Gherardi, p. 74, from the journal of the city Chancellor.

[3] Gherardi, p. 75.

[4] Another letter of the same date, and of precisely the same tenor, immediately follows in Gherardi's collection. Probably one was sent by a courier, the other was to be presented by the commissioners themselves.

28th January, 1496.[1] The document, as a whole, is perhaps of some interest from a legal point of view, or from that of the local antiquary, but for our present purpose we take note only of its opening clauses. It sets forth that :—

"Whereas the Convent of S. Marco has become incapable of accommodating the number of brethren who seek admission within its walls, their magnificent highnesses the Signory of Florence desire that they may be put in possession of another convent, to wit that of S. Domenico at Prato; we therefore (*i.e.* Torriano) wishing to satisfy the laudable desire of the Signory, and lending a favourable ear to the petition of the people of Prato, and being well disposed to the Tuscan Congregation, which, as we believe, will greatly promote the honour of God and the good of souls, do now (with the consent of the Provincial of the Roman Province) convey the said convent at Prato to Fra Hieronymo as Vicar of the said Congregation; and we hereby remove, and declare to be removed the brethren, professed or otherwise, who have been hitherto in possession thereof."

The business was carried out with remarkable promptness. Already in 30th January 1496 the Signory wrote to the magistrates of Prato, thanking them for the steps which they had taken; but at the same time they thought it well to send Domenico Mazzinghi once more to see that the final arrangements were carried out without fail.[2] On that same day the Florentine brethren entered into possession; and on the next Fra Antonio di' Olandia was elected Prior of the new community. It was he who had been chosen Prior at Pisa in 1494, but had been obliged to return to Florence a few months later.

It is not a little remarkable that, during the latter part of these proceedings at Prato, Savonarola lay under a sentence of suspension from preaching, as will hereafter appear. The circumstance shows how far Torriano was from entertaining any prejudice against him in consequence of his suspension; a point which has its bearing on subsequent events.

[1] Gherardi, pp. 77 *sqq.* [2] Gherardi, p. 83.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FRIAR AND THE FRENCH KING

THE general rule of prudence, if not always of obedience, which prescribes that the members of religious orders shall, under ordinary circumstances, abstain from taking an active part in political affairs, is one which was well understood, if not always well observed, in the fifteenth century; and its recognition was by no means reserved for the post-Tridentine period of the history of the Church. The words of S. Paul: "No man being a soldier to God entangleth himself in secular business," [1] were as familiar to Fra Girolamo as they can be to any one in our own days, and they were in fact alleged against him by some of those who blamed him for the part which he took in public affairs.[2] The rule, however, is one which admits of exceptions under exceptional circumstances; and we are not of the number of those who, simply because Fra Girolamo took a prominent part in the political life of Florence during the years 1492-98, are prepared to condemn his action without more ado. The circumstances of his time, and his position in the city, were undoubtedly exceptional; and the case is one which deserves careful examination before a judgment is passed either of condemnation or of approval.

Two distinct phases of his conduct have to be considered; his relations with the French King, Charles VIII., and his action with regard to the internal politics of Florence.

The invasion of Italy by Charles VIII. in 1494, an event which marked an era in the political history of Europe, undoubtedly had the appearance at the time of being the fulfilment of Fra Girolamo's prophecy that a dire calamity was soon to fall upon his country. For a dire calamity it most assuredly was, disastrous not merely in its immediate results, but as having paved the way for future expeditions of the same kind.

[1] 2 Tim. ii. 4.

[2] Burlamacchi, p. 78.

It cannot then be wondered at that Fra Girolamo should have appealed to the event as setting the seal upon his prophetic mission. "Behold," he cried, "the sword has descended, the scourge has fallen, the prophecies are being fulfilled; behold, it is the Lord who is leading on these armies."[1] Nor was this all. It was not merely that in general terms he had predicted coming disasters. More than once he had predicted, in his public sermons, that a royal invader should cross the Alps, coming like another Cyrus to be the instrument in God's hands for the chastisement of the people of Italy, and in particular of Rome. Nay, more than this, he had—so he tells us himself—foretold how the adversaries of the invader would be utterly unable to withstand him, and how the rulers of Florence would behave like drunken men, not knowing what they were about, and would seek the alliance of one who was to be vanquished.[2]

The prophecy, or the forecast mistaken for a prophecy, was fulfilled, it must be confessed, with remarkable accuracy. The ease with which the French army overran the dominions of the King of Naples—to say nothing of the collapse of every attempt at opposition from other quarters—appeared so extraordinary, that contemporary writers saw in the sudden success of Charles VIII. a divine judgment on the cruel and faithless government under which the southern kingdom had so long groaned.[3] And the Friar's words about the

[1] S. 1 on Aggaeus, 1st November 1494; Villari, i. 226.

[2] "Post ista vero Deo pariter inspirante praedixi quemdam transiturum Alpes in Italiam similem Cyro, de quo ita scribit Esaias: Haec dicit Dominus Christo meo Cyro, cujus apprehendi dexteram, etc. . . . (Isai. xlv. 1 *sqq.*). Dixi quoque ne Italia arcibus et propugnaculis suis fideret, quum absque ulla difficultate ab illo expugnarentur; Florentinis etiam praedixi, *eos praesertim innuens qui tunc gubernabant* (*i.e.* Piero de' Medici and his supporters) ipsos electuros esse consilium ac deliberationem suae saluti atque utilitati contrariam, et quod infirmiori et qui superandus esset adhaererent (*i.e.* to the King of Naples); quodque tanquam temulenti omne consilium prorsus amitterent" (*Compendium Revelationum*, pp. 254-55).

[3] "Adì 2 di Marzo (1495) venne lettere . . . dal Re di Francia come haveva avuto vittoria di Napoli. . . . E nota tu lettore, e considera il giudizio di Dio, che un si fatto Rè di Napoli si sia fuggito et abbandonato il Regno con si fatte rocche inespugnabili. . . . E questo procede per guzisto giudizio, perchè lo Re Ferrando, e lo Re Alfonso, si sono portati inverso li lor popoli e sudditi con gravezzi, tradimenti, morti di tanti Baroni e Signori del Reame, e con osservare poca fede," etc. (Allegretti, *Diari Sanesi*, in Muratori, *R. I. S.* xxiii. 841). Similarly the author of the *Diario Ferrarese* (Muratori, xxiv. 294): "Il Re di Franza in Napoli pacifice con grandissimo triumpho et allegreza di quello Popolo intrò et have tutto generaliter quello Reame di Napoli senza una colpa di spada, et senza uccisione di persona; ma parse, che come Messo mandato da Dio l'habbia havuto il tutto."

"drunken" counsel of the Florentines were certainly verified when Piero de' Medici, instead of either preserving a prudent neutrality like his neighbour the Duke of Ferrara, or at least counting the cost of a determined resistance to Charles VIII., first provoked him by an uncalled-for show of amity with the King of Naples, and then abjectly yielded to his most exorbitant demands.[1]

But the not unimportant question here arises: When were these predictions first made? Savonarola himself declares that it was subsequently to the vision of "the sword of the Lord," *i.e.* at some time after the close of Advent 1492, and therefore not before the year 1493, that he first began to speak "by divine inspiration" about the coming of the new Cyrus.[2] Moreover, since he spent the Lent of 1493 at Bologna, the prediction cannot be placed earlier than the summer or autumn of that year, and probably not before Advent, or possibly not before the Lent of 1494.[3] Burlamacchi throws no light upon the subject, for he merely repeats the statements of the *Compendium Revelationum*.[4] Cinozzi, however, who seems to imply that he himself repeatedly heard the prediction, tells us that it was uttered "in 1494," when Fra Girolamo "was preaching at S. Lorenzo."[5] Unfortunately this is an intrinsically impossible statement, for the simple reason that in 1494 Fra Girolamo did not preach at S. Lorenzo, but in the Duomo. The only course of sermons which he preached at S. Lorenzo was, as Vivoli very

These writers can hardly have been directly influenced by any words of Savonarola. They express the ideas current at the time; ideas, however, to which the letters of the French king (to which both refer) helped to give currency.

[1] Cinozzi (p. 18) and Burlamacchi (p. 67) trace in some detail the fulfilment of the "prophecy" so far as it concerned the vacillating policy of Piero.

[2] "Post ista" (*Compendium Revelationum*, *loc. cit.*).

[3] Probably not before Advent, for there is no evidence to show that Fra Girolamo delivered a course of public sermons in the summer or autumn of 1493.

[4] Burlamacchi, p. 67.

[5] Cinozzi writes (p. 17): "Nel 1494, predicando in S. Lorenzo, disse formaliter quete parole (essendo in pace tutto il mondo, andò che dalla maggior parte era deriso): 'Credetemi quello che vi dico, e' verrà presto uno di là da e monti a uso di Cyro,'" etc.; and presently, after giving the words about the drunken men, he adds: "E le parole supra dette del Padre, le udi' da lui molte volte," which may perhaps be taken (though we do not think they ought to be so taken) to mean no more than that at a subsequent period the writer frequently heard Savonarola repeat what he had previously said. It is not safe to lay too much stress on the words: "Essendo in pace tutto il mondo," or on the remark about the derision with which the prediction was listened to, for Savonarola himself assures us (*Compendium Revelationum*, *loc. cit.*) that he was laughed to scorn even when the disaster was immediately imminent.

explicitly states, the Lent of 1492.[1] It might indeed be urged that Cinozzi's recollection of the place where he heard the words is to be trusted rather than his assignment of the date at which he heard them. But, on the other hand, he would have the strongest motive for giving the earliest possible date; and if the prediction had indeed been uttered in Lent 1492, while Lorenzo de' Medici was still alive, or immediately after his death, the circumstance would have been so remarkable that it could hardly have escaped explicit notice. Moreover, Savonarola himself implies that at the time when the Advent of "Cyrus" was foretold, Piero de' Medici was already in power.[2] But in fact there are, as has been seen, independent grounds, based on Savonarola's own words, and on the facts of his life, for rejecting any hypothesis which would place the prediction so early as 1492. On the other hand, we cannot be certain that it ought to be placed so late as the Lent of 1494. For the sermons preached during that season are extant, and they do not contain the prophecy, nor—with every allowance for incomplete reporting—is it easy to see in which of them it could have found an appropriate place.[3] Either, then, it was in Advent 1493 that Savonarola first began to speak of the Cyrus who was to come, or else the prediction uttered in Lent 1494 was so far of the nature of an *obiter dictum* that it has found no place in the published report of the sermons.

The question as to the precise date of the prediction (which so far as we are aware has not been discussed by any other writer) might seem indeed to be of little or no importance were it not that throughout the later months of 1493 negotiations were on foot between Charles VIII. and the princes of northern Italy having reference to the projected expedition. And at least from the commencement of 1494 it was matter of common knowledge that the invasion was being actively planned.[4] This being so, the

[1] Vivoli, *Prima Giornata*, in Villari, i. Append. p. lix.

[2] "Eos praesertim innuens qui tunc gubernabant" (*Compendium Revelationum*, *loc. cit.*).

[3] That the published sermons *Super Arcam* belong to 1494, not (as Vivoli and Villari suppose) to 1492, will be shown in a subsequent note.

[4] The first negotiations on the part of Charles VIII. with the Republic of Venice were opened shortly after 25th April 1493 (*Storia Veneziana*, in Muratori, *R. I. S.* xxiii. 1201). It is true that Commines (*Memoirs*, book vi. ch. v., *Eng. Trans.*, ii. 119 *sqq.*) writes: "In the year 1493 the king advanced to Lyons, to examine into his affairs [*i.e.* in connection with the expedition]; *but nobody ever imagined that he would have passed the mountains himself.*" But the rumour of a probable invasion had certainly gained general currency very early in 1494, if not sooner,

hypothesis of a divine revelation hardly seems necessary to account for Savonarola's words, assuming them to have been uttered in Advent 1493 or Lent 1494.[1] It was of course impossible that any one should, by purely natural means, foresee with full certainty the issue of the negotiations and preparations that were afoot. But the circumstances of the time at least afforded grounds for a shrewd conjecture both as to the general results of the invasion, and as to the individual policy of Piero de' Medici, of which indeed he made no secret. Obviously, if the invasion was to be successful, Piero's line of action would be shown, by the hard logic of facts, to have been politically futile. And a strong desire, such as Fra Girolamo unquestionably entertained, would at least go a long way to inspire confidence in the event. The event, as it happened, justified the prophet's confidence, until—with quite unforeseen suddenness—the political pendulum swung back, the young King of Naples quickly recovered what his father had so quickly lost, and Charles VIII., the expected Cyrus, beat an inglorious retreat.[2]

We are the more inclined to think that, in this matter of the prediction of the French invasion, Fra Girolamo was deceived as to the divine origin of his predictions, because, in connection with this very matter, he seems to have allowed himself to be strangely deceived as to his own past action. Less than two years after the invasion he wrote these words:—

"It is well known to those who have habitually heard me, how precisely the portions of Scripture which I have expounded have corresponded to the actual condition of affairs. Among other instances there

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for Landucci writes, under date 29th January: "E a dì 29 . . . ci fù, come el Re di Napoli era morto. *Alcuni dicevano che gli era morte di maninconia, perchè intendeva tattavolta che' l Re di Francia passava*" (*Diario*, p. 66). Allegretti in his *Diari Sanesi* first mentions the French expedition on 7th March (Muratori, xxiii. 868).

[1] If we might believe Nardi's description of the prevalent feeling we should have to say that Fra Girolamo only gave public utterance to thoughts which were already in the minds of many. "Per la qual cosa (viz. the rumour of the impending invasion) in tutti i luoghi e nella corte della Chiesa romana massimamente, era nato gran travaglio e perturbazione, come se Iddio avesse eletto questo principe per suo singolare instrumento a causare qualche rilevato effetto nella sua santa Chiesa" (i. 20, 21). Speaking of a later time (June 1495) the author of the *Diario Ferrarese* says: "Tutta Italia gridavano ad una voce: Franza! Franza! praeter li Signori e Signorie" (Muratori, xxiv. 309).

[2] Ferrante of Naples died, as has been seen, in January 1494, before the invasion. His son Alfonso abdicated, just a year later, in favour of Ferrante II.

is one which has excited the wonder of men who are distinguished for ability and learning, viz. that whereas from the year 1491 till 1494, with the exception of one Lent at Bologna, I preached on Genesis *during the whole of every Advent and Lent*, and whereas I always took up the exposition of the text at the point where I had left it at the close of the previous Advent or Lent, I could never reach the chapter on the Flood until these tribulations had already commenced. Moreover, whereas I had supposed that I should be able to expound in a few days the mystery of the construction of the Ark, so many new thoughts offered themselves day by day that I spent the whole Advent and Lent of 1494 on that mystery."[1]

Now, as a simple matter of fact, it is not true that Savonarola preached on Genesis in every Advent and Lent from 1491 to 1494, with the sole exception of the Lent at Bologna. The period in question embraces three Advents and four Lents, of these, the Lent of 1491 was occupied with sermons "on the Gospels" *i.e.* on the Gospel lessons of the respective days; one Advent was devoted to the exposition of the First Epistle of S. John, and another to that of the Psalm: "Quam bonus Israel Deus." This would leave the Lenten seasons of 1492 and 1494, and the Advent of 1493 as the basis of the sweeping statement which we have quoted from the *Compendium Revelationum*.[2] Moreover, it is only by a straining of language that he can be said to have preached continuously on the sixth chapter of Genesis throughout the Lent of 1494,

[1] *Compendium Revelationum*, pp. 228-29. He obviously means the Advent of 1493 and the Lent of 1494.

[2] The Lent sermons of 1491 "on the Gospels" are attested by the rough drafts which still survive, and of which several have been published by Villari. They obviously belong to a Lent, and can belong to no other Lent. The Lenten course of 1492, preached at S. Lorenzo, is mentioned by Vivoli, and there is no reason to doubt that these sermons were on the Book of Genesis. But Vivoli is mistaken in supposing that the printed sermons *Super Arcam* belong to that year, an error in which he has been followed by Villari (i. 200, and Append. p. lix.). They undoubtedly belong to 1494, for at the head of the discourse for the Tuesday in Holy Week it is mentioned that this day fell on 25th March, as was in fact the case in 1494, but not in 1492. But these discourses, in their turn, allude to previous sermons on the same subject as having been preached in the preceding Advent (1493). Consequently the sermons on the Psalm, "Quam bonus," notwithstanding Luotto's ascription of them to Advent 1493, must really belong to a previous year, *i.e.* either to 1491 or to 1492. Internal indications make it clear that these discourses, and also the sermons on the First Epistle of S. John, belong to the Advent and Christmas season; but it is not clear which of the two series is earlier in date. At any rate the two Advents, of 1491 and 1492, are both accounted for; and it will be seen from what has been said that the list of Savonarola's sermons given by Luotto (p. 18) needs revision and correction.

inasmuch as the great bulk of the sermons delivered during that season have no connection with the text of Genesis vi. beyond the purely artificial arrangement by which, as has been said, ten points of general instruction are in each discourse made to do duty as ten planks of the mystical Ark. When, then, Burlamacchi writes: "This was wonderful, that whereas he expounded Genesis for many years, and was engaged in explaining the construction of the Ark, he could never reach the words: 'I will bring on the waters of a deluge' until the King of France had entered Italy with his army," it appears to us that he is creating a mystery when in reality there is none. A preacher who could occupy the whole of Lent with discourses professedly based on three or four verses of Genesis (vi. 13-16), and who could choose his own time for the resumption of his series of sermons, would experience no difficulty in reserving the critical text for the appropriate historical and psychological moment; and one who was so deeply convinced of his mission to read and interpret the signs of the times would be under the very strongest inducement — an inducement none the less powerful because it was not fully present to his consciousness— to exercise this very obvious device of rhetorical economy. Again, it would seem that Villari has rather unduly emphasised the precise aptness of the occasion on which Savonarola preached on the text: "Ecce adducam aqua diluvii super terram."

"It was [he says] the 21st of September, a memorable day for Savonarola and for Florence. The Duomo could hardly contain the crowd of people who, full of a new anxiety, now more keen than ever, had awaited him since the morning. At last the orator mounted the pulpit, and having first gazed upon the audience, and perceived the unwonted trepidation by which it was dominated, he cried with a terrible voice: *Ecce adducam aquas*, etc. His voice seemed like a clap of thunder bursting within the church; his words seemed to strike every one with a stormy panic. Pico della Mirandola relates that a cold shiver ran through all his bones, and that his hair stood on end, and Savonarola himself declared that on that day he was not less deeply moved than his hearers."[1]

We do not pretend to say that this narrative is, so far, exaggerated; for Cerretani, a very impartial witness, attests the extraordinary connection produced in the city—not indeed by this individual

[1] Villari, i. 203; *Compendium Revelationum*, p. 229.

sermon—but by these September discourses generally.[1] But when Villari goes on to say that "precisely during these days the news had arrived like an unexpected thunderbolt, that an inundation of foreign troops was sweeping over the Alps to conquer Italy," he is perhaps stretching the facts a little to suit a theory. The fact is, that on 5th August the French ambassadors were already in Florence, treating with the Signory for the passage of the king's troops, and were assured that the Florentines were the king's most faithful friends.[2] The king actually set out upon his march on 22nd August; on 5th September he arrived at Turin, and on the 21st the report reached Florence (though it afterwards proved unfounded) that he had entered Genoa.[3] It is perfectly true that many even of those who had desired the advent of the king had by this time been seized with a kind of panic fear at his approach, and the tidings of the sack of Rapallo (8th September) had increased the alarm;[4] but it may not unreasonably be suggested that this very alarm, still further intensified as it was by the preacher's vehemence, may have helped men to discover so peculiar an opportuneness in the text on which Fra Girolamo preached on the Feast of S. Matthew 1494. So far from suggesting that the news of the invasion had come "like an unexpected thunderbolt," he himself says very simply that "when it was now known that the French king with his army had already entered Italy," he preached on the text: "Ecce adducam aquas."

It is not without reason that we insist on the insufficiency of the grounds on which a special divine revelation is claimed for Savonarola in connection with the expedition of Charles VIII. If he was not the recipient of such a revelation, if he was—in plain words—deluded in this instance, as we believe him to have been in others, then his action in relation to this event was such as to involve him in a very grave responsibility, from which nothing but the plea of good faith can relieve him.

The two men who more than all others helped to draw upon

[1] "Aveva predicato in Santa Liperata, et avendo a l'entrata del re di' Francia in Italia a punto chiuso l'Arca con tanto terrore, spaventi, e grida e pianti, aveva fatto alcune prediche, *che ciascuno quasi semivivo, sanza parlare*, per la città sbigottiti s'agiravano" (Cerretani, quoted by Villari, i. 203 n.).

[2] Landucci, *Diario*, 5th August. He cautiously adds: "Benchè io non abbi queste cose se non per pubrica voce e fama." But the value of his testimony is precisely this, that he lets us know what the "pubrica voce e fama" was.

[3] Landucci, 21st September.

[4] Pastor, v. 434-45.

Italy the flood of the French invasion were Lodovico Sforza, the Regent (afterwards Duke) of Milan, and Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, who afterwards succeeded Alexander VI. on the Pontifical throne as Julius II. The primary pretext for the expedition was, of course, the claim to the kingdom of Naples which Charles had inherited, as he alleged, from René of Anjou.[1] But it may be safely said that the wish to enforce this futile claim would never have caused the king to cross the Alps were it not that he was stimulated to the enterprise by external influences.[2] The motive which led Lodovico to desire the invasion was his fear lest he should be dispossessed of his own usurped dominion over Milan by the King of Naples. The rightful holder of the Dukedom was Lodovico's nephew, Giangaleazzo Sforza, whose wife Isabella was niece to Ferrante of Naples. Lodovico kept Giangaleazzo, a youth of weak health and character, in close confinement. Isabella naturally sought the redress of her own and her husband's grievances at the hands of her family.[3] On the other hand, the Cardinal of S. Pietro in Vincoli (as he is commonly styled in contemporary documents) helped to give to the expedition something of the semblance of a war waged in the cause of religion and of the Church. He was the chief among a number of the cardinals who more or less avowedly entertained hopes of securing the deposition of Alexander on the ground of his simoniacal election, and who at least professed a desire to bring about the reformation of the Church by means of a general Council. To the Cardinal della Rovere it was perhaps principally due that the invader displayed on his standards the legends: "Voluntas Dei" and: "Missus a Deo." And a letter from Stefano Taverna to Sforza shows that the usurper of Milan well understood the value of the Cardinal's help as giving respectability and even a certain dignity to the expedition.[4] But while these two men were the prime movers of the scheme, it can hardly be doubted that Fra Girolamo likewise contributed, though in a subordinate degree, if not to the first bringing on, at least to the furtherance of the invasion. To be hailed as the Cyrus who was to do the Lord's work in Italy was unquestionably calculated to remove the vacillating indecision which so long held back the king from entering

[1] Commines, *Memoirs*, book vii. ch. i.; *Eng. Trans.* ii. 96.
[2] Commines, *ibid.*, p. 98.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 102, 107.
[4] Pastor, v. 423 *sqq.*, 544.

seriously upon his undertaking. And if it be contended on the one hand, and conceded on the other, that Charles probably never even heard of Fra Girolamo and his predictions until he had already set foot in Italy, he at least had not been long there before he received, at the hands of the Florentine prophet, the most explicit assurances that God would be with him in his enterprise.[1]

As regards the actual designs and motives of Charles VIII., whose programme included the recovery of Jerusalem and the conquest of the Turks, there is perhaps room for some difference of opinion. Pastor writes: "It is difficult to believe that he could have entertained any serious hopes of conquering Jerusalem in the course of his intended expedition against the Turks."[2] Ranke, on the other hand, represents him as thoroughly in earnest about the scheme for the deposition of the Pope.[3] But it is obviously impossible to gauge the real mind of a man so thoroughly under the influence of imagination, and so little capable of any sustained effort. The greater schemes no doubt served to feed his ambition, and to persuade him that in its gratification he was doing a great work.

How it came about that Fra Girolamo had several interviews with the French King must now be explained. Piero de' Medici had, on the very eve of the invasion, gone out of his way to make an ostentatious display of his disposition to espouse the cause of Alfonso of Naples. While the French envoys were actually in Florence, endeavouring to obtain the consent of the Signory to the passage of the invading army ("chiedendo el passo"), Piero paid a visit of ceremony to the Duke of Calabria, the son and heir of Alfonso—a foolish course to adopt unless he was sure of the support of the Signory and of the people in the resistance which he proposed to offer to Charles VIII.[4] But this support altogether failed him. There was a strong party in Florence (perhaps not altogether uninfluenced by Savonarola's

[1] The letters which he wrote after the conquest of Naples, and to which, as has been seen, the Sienese and Ferrarese diarists refer, show how thoroughly he was imbued with the ideas impressed upon him by Fra Girolamo.

[2] Pastor, v. 453.

[3] Ranke, *Historich-biographische Studien*, p. 233.

[4] "E a dì 5 d' agosto 1494, andò Piero de' Medici incontro al Duca di Calavria, in quello d' Arezzo, a vicitarlo, come si va a vicitare un gran maestro, un signore. Essendo in Firenze gl' inbasciadori del Re di Francia, e chiedendo el passo . . . e intendendo questa andata di Piero, presono sospetto," etc. (Landucci, *Diario*, p. 69).

preaching) which was in favour of maintaining friendly relations with France; and Piero's appeal for efficient help towards putting the city and its possessions in a state of defence proved entirely futile.[1] Besides which he found, to his alarm, that on other grounds also his personal influence was greatly on the wane. Under these circumstances he rather suddenly changed his plans. He set out from Florence at the head of an embassy of distinguished citizens to greet the French king; but the embassy had hardly left the city when, with a few personal friends, he left the company of his fellow ambassadors, and, in the mood to make any concession that might be demanded of him, and thinking thus to secure for himself personally the support of Charles, he sought the royal camp.[2] That such were his real intentions, and not merely imaginary motives, attributed to him by his enemies, is made clear by an extraordinary letter which he wrote at this time to his secretary, Piero Bibbiena, bidding him to assure the envoy of the King of Naples of his unalterable attachment to the Angevin dynasty, to excuse his present action on the ground of extreme necessity, and to explain that he hoped to be able to help Alfonso more effectually by his influence with Charles VIII. than he could do by attempting to exert authority over his fellow-citizens to force them to an open alliance with Naples. "I go," he writes, "as a victim to the sacrifice (trahor ad immolandum)."[3] Under these circumstances it is no wonder that when Charles VIII. demanded, as pledges of the fidelity of Florence, the temporary cession of Pisa, Leghorn, Sarzana, and Pietrasanta, and a subsidy of 200,000 florins, Piero at once complied with the modest request; himself handing over the fortresses of Sarzana and Pietrasanta, and

[1] Nardi, i. 26. This historian, though entirely hostile to Piero, gives him credit for having made strenuous efforts to provide for a war.

[2] Nardi, i. 26, 27. "Piero," says Guicciardini, "seguitando . . . benchè in diversi termini e poco a proposito, l'esemplo del padre Lorenzo quando andò a Napoli, *una sera furiosamente*, accompagnato da Jacopo Gianfigliazzi, Giannozzo Pucci, e altri amici suoi, se ne andò a Serezana a trovare il re (*Storia Fiorentina*, pp. 107-8).

[3] Piero de' Medici to Bibbiena, 27th October 1494. The letter was first published by Fabroni, and has been reprinted by Gelli in his edition of Nardi (i. 27). Piero's words are as abject as they could well be. "Abbandonato da tutti cittadini fiorentini amici et inimici miei, non mi bastando più nè la reputazione, nè li denari, nè il credito a sostenere la guerra . . . ho preso per partito, non potendo servire per le forze (le quali jam defecerunt) alla M. del Sig. Re Alph., *servirla almeno colla disperatione, la quale mi conduce a darmi in potere del Re di Francia senza conditione o speranza di bene alcuno*," etc.

promising the rest.[1] The king himself appears to have been surprised at the alacrity of Piero's submission, and he despatched Lorenzo Tornabuoni to Florence to enquire whether the concessions had been made with authority.[2]

The indignation excited by the news thus received was naturally very great, if not among the common people, who were not yet fully awakened to a sense of their political importance, at least among the more considerable citizens, and in particular among the officials of the republic. When, however, Villari describes the populace as thronging the streets and squares, carrying in their hands the old and rusty weapons of a bygone day, determined that something must be done, yet quite undetermined what that something ought to be, needing—yet only needing—a leader and a cry to give a definite action to their energies, he draws a fancy picture which, so far as we have been able to discover, finds no support in contemporary documents.[3] Had the case really been as he represents it, we can hardly doubt that Fra Girolamo, who precisely at this juncture commenced a new series of sermons (the discourses on Aggaeus) would have made "Peace!" his chief watchword. He himself tells us, in the *Compendium Revelationum*, how on those first days of November he "spared neither voice nor lungs" in his passionate appeals to the people, so that his exertions had quite exhausted him.[4] But the burden of his preaching on those days, as the reader of the sermons

[1] Nardi (*loc. cit.*) says that Piero offered the fortresses "quasi che spontaneamente"; Pitti (p. 31) and Gaddi (*Il Priorista;* in *A. S. I.* 1, iv. part ii. p. 42) both say that they were demanded by the king. But both agree that Piero began by assuring his majesty that he was ready to do anything that might be demanded of him.

[2] "El Re volendo intendere el vero se gli aveva questa comissione, e' venne qui Lorenzo di Giovanni Tornabuoni, ch' era andato col detto Piero . . . e andò alla Signoria, che gli fusse dato questa comissione; e nollo vollono fare. E Lorenzo un poco sbigottito non tornò in la" (Landucci, p. 71).

[3] Villari, i. 224-25. He gives Nardi as his authority. But Nardi only says: "Queste cose intese in Fiorenza dalla Signoria e dal populo, diedero universalmente gran perturbatione alla citta"; and there is reason to think that even this statement is rather exaggerated. Gaddi (p. 43) speaks of "ammiratione e dispiacere grande," and Pitti (p. 31) of "ammirazione e disturbo"; but both describe this stormy feeling as showing itself mainly in the official debates of the Collegio. Landucci, a man of the people, with no pretensions to political importance, says very simply: "Onde Piero fu *un poco biasimato*" (!) And he forthwith hastens to excuse him: "E fece come giovanetto, e forse a buon fine, poichè si restò amico del Re, a lalde di Dio" (p. 71).

[4] *Compendium Revelationum*, p. 236.

on Aggaeus may see for himself, and as Savonarola explicitly tells us, was not "Peace," but "Penance."[1] And undoubtedly, in making use of the general alarm to arouse the people to a sense of sin, and to move them to shame and repentance, he went to the very root of the real evil which, apart from all political complications, afflicted the city. And although "peace and union and charity" were not, as Villari seems to imply, the leading themes of his opening discourses, his call to penance, and his insistence on the thought that the course of events lay in the hand of God, did much to predispose the people to a peaceful solution of the practical political problem which now presented itself.

That Fra Girolamo himself recognised the existence and the gravity of the constitutional crisis is at least suggested by a phrase that occurs in the first of these sermons. "Do you not remember," he asks, "how often I have told you that God will renovate His Church . . . and that the sword is near at hand, *and that these governments* (questi governi) *are displeasing to God?*"[2] Of course the words "questi governi" refer principally to the misrule of Alexander VI. and his predecessors, but the form of the expression is such that it can hardly be understood otherwise than as including in its scope the secular government of the Italian princes, those "tyrants" who were his particular aversion, and among them that of Piero de' Medici.

How marked was the effect of his words clearly appears from what happened within the next few days. On 4th November a special assembly of the more prominent citizens was summoned by the Signory to discuss the crisis.[3] The debate has been reported in considerable detail by Cerretani, whose account of it has been re-

[1] "Tunc" (*i.e.* on the first three days of November) "solvenda tantum pane et aqua jejunia, et frequentes ad Deum orationes universo populo indixi, saepe altius exclamans verba ab eodem [revelationis] fonte hausta . . . scilicet: O Italia . . . O Florentia . . . propter peccata tua venient tibi adversa. O clerica, propter te orta est haec tempestas" (*Compendium Revelationem*, *loc. cit.*).

[2] S. 1 on Aggaeus. With reference to the choice of the Book of Aggaeus (Haggai) for exposition at this time, Villari (i. 227) writes: "Aggeo fu il profeta che parlò agli Ebrei, usciti appena dalla servitù di Babilonia, incitandoli a ricostruire il tempio; è facile quindi comprendere, perchè il Savonarola lo prendesse allora ad esporre."

[3] "Perchè la Signoria, facendo incontanente (but really after an interval of a week) chiamare a se i piu savi e prudenti cittadini (chiamavansi questi così fatti consegli Pratiche), accio che sopra il ben essere della repubblica in quei travagli consigliassero" (Acciaioli, *Vita di P. Capponi; A. S. I.* iv. part ii. p. 29).

produced, presumably with fidelity, by Villari.[1] On such occasions the ordinary procedure was that, although all might vote for or against any proposal that might be made by the Signory, no one might speak unless invited to do so, and this under restrictions which must have been somewhat galling to men of an independent spirit. But on this eventful day feeling ran so high that more than one member of the council rose unbidden to speak, and the aged Tanai de' Nerli felt himself constrained to apologise for the presumption of his own son in venturing so to do. The occasion, however, was not one for forms and ceremonies, and the discussion was brought to a head when Piero Capponi roundly declared that Piero de' Medici was no longer capable of ruling the Republic, and that it was time to have done with this "childish government" ("ormai e tempo uscire di questo governo di fanciulli").[2] As a practical measure he proposed that a fresh embassy should be sent to Charles VIII. to deal with him independently of Piero; and that while the king should be assured of a friendly welcome to Florence, and a handsome subsidy should be offered him, efficacious measures should be taken to provide against any abuse of the hospitality which they were about to show him.[3] The troops in the pay of the Republic should be concentrated in the city, and the citizens should hold themselves in readiness to come forth under arms in the event of any intolerable

[1] Villari, i. 227 *sqq.*

[2] This is confirmed by Acciaioli ("Disse quelle vulgate parole: Essere ormai tempo di uscire di governo di fanciulli e di ricuperare la libertà," p. 30), though Gaddi (*Il Priorista*, p. 43) attributes the words to Jacopo de' Nerli. Acciaioli (*loc. cit.*) adds that, as they left the palace, Giovanni Vettori said to Capponi that his words would put Piero de' Medici in danger of his life should he return to Florence. "In that case," said Capponi, "it is to be hoped that he will not return."

[3] It is noteworthy that not a word seems to have been said about revoking the concession made by Piero. Capponi distinctly approved the offer of a large subsidy: "Non si sia da noi mancato in nulla di ciò che e onesto con questo Christianissimo principe *nè tralasciato di contentare con danari l'avara natura de' Francesi*" (Villari, *loc. cit.*). And in the agreement ultimately made with the king, on 25th November, it is expressly stipulated that the fortresses (including Pisa, which in the meanwhile had revolted from Florence) should remain in his custody during the war. "Tertio convenerunt: quod civitas Pisarum, et arx, una cum oppido et arce Liburni, remaneant in manibus dictae Regiae Majestatis, illasque retinere possit durante sua impresia regni Neapolitani. . . . Quinto etiam convenerunt: quod civitas Serzanae, et arces dictae civitatis, et Serzanilla, et oppidum Petrae Sanctae, remaneant etiam in manibus dictae Regiae Majestatis durante dicta sua impresia." (The text of the treaty is given in *A. S. I.*, i. 362 *sqq.*) The subsidy, however, was reduced from 200,000 ducats to 120,000.

action on the part of the French. But above all, he said in conclusion, let Fra Girolamo Savonarola, who has won for himself the love of the people, be sent with the other ambassadors. These provisions were adopted by a vote of the Signory taken on the following day.

At the urgent solicitation of his friends, both religious and secular, Fra Girolamo undertook this mission.[1] But he made the journey on foot, apart from the other envoys, attended by two companions of his own Order.[2] Before setting out, he addressed to the people a moving discourse on behalf of internal peace. "The Lord has heard your prayers," he said, "and has caused a great revolution to end peaceably"; words which show that he, at least, clearly understood the significance of the recent act of the Signory in disowning the acts of Piero de' Medici.

"Persevere, then, O people of Florence, in good works, persevere in peace. If you wish the Lord to persevere in His mercy to yourselves, be merciful to your brethren, to your friends, to your enemies. . . . The Lord saith unto you . . . 'I will have mercy.' Woe to those who disobey His commands."[3]

He has himself left on record the speech which, on this occasion, he addressed to the King. It is in more than one respect characteristic of the man, and while we may and do admire his fearlessness, and the excellence of his practical advice, it may be permissible to regret the assurance which he gave to the king that his expedition was in accordance with the divine will.

"Almighty God, in whose hand is all power and royalty, communicates His goodness to His creatures in two ways, viz. by mercy and by justice. . . . And whereas the immense goodness of God has now for so many years patiently borne with the sins of Italy, and has so long waited for her repentance, whereto He has sweetly called her by the voice of many of His servants; and whereas she, on the other hand, has turned a deaf ear to the admonition of her pastor, and has rather abused the patience of God in her pride, and has daily multiplied her crimes, despising the holy sacrament of baptism and the blood of Christ, and putting on the brazen face of a harlot; therefore the Supreme and Omnipotent God has determined to proceed by way of justice, and to execute judgment on her. But because God is wont to temper justice with mercy, it has

[1] "In quo patres Ordinis nostri et alios cives mature consulens, ab omnibus unanimiter ad hanc profectionem adhortatus fui" (*Compendium Revelationum*, p. 237).

[2] Villari, i. 231, who refers to Parenti.

[3] S. 3 on Aggaeus; Villari, *loc. cit.*

pleased Him to reveal to one unprofitable servant of His the secret (sacramentum) of His intention to reform His Church by means of a grievous scourge. This secret His servant—having learnt the same by divine inspiration and visions—began, more than three years since, to proclaim to the people of Florence, as those who are here present, together with the whole population of the city, can testify. But God, who cannot deceive, has brought to pass everything, down to the smallest detail (ad unguem), which has been foretold by His command, so that men have no hesitation in believing that the rest of what has been predicted will certainly be fulfilled.

"And although that same unprofitable servant never mentioned your Royal Highness by name (numquam Tuae Coroae nomen protulerit) since God did not so will, nevertheless, it was you to whom he alluded (praedicando circumscribebat ac latenter indicabat), and it was your arrival that was to be looked for. Accordingly, at last you have come, O King; you have come as God's minister, the minister of His justice, and may your advent have in every respect a happy issue. With joyful heart and cheerful countenance we welcome you. Your arrival has filled with joy every servant of Christ, and every one who pursues justice, and is zealous for the cause of holy living; for they hope that through your ministry God will put down the proud and exalt the humble, will extirpate vice and magnify virtue . . . and will reform whatsoever is in need of reformation. Go forward then in gladness, in security, in triumph, since you are sent by Him who on the tree of the Cross victoriously won salvation for us.

"Nevertheless, most Christian King, receive these words of mine with attention, and lay them to heart. The unprofitable servant, to whom this secret has been revealed, exhorts and admonishes you in the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the whole court of heaven, that whereas you have been sent by Christ, you should, after His example, everywhere exercise mercy. But most of all in His city of Florence, which, though it labours under the burden of many sins, yet counts among its members many servants of God of both sexes, both secular and religious. For their sake you ought to preserve the city, to the end that with a more tranquil mind they may intercede with God for the good success of your expedition. And the same unprofitable servant exhorts and admonishes you in God's name to use every effort for the protection and defence of the innocent, of widows, and of orphans, and most especially to defend the honour of those spouses of Christ who dwell in convents, lest you should be the occasion of fresh sins. For if wickedness should by your means be increased, know that the power given to you from on high will be shattered (infirmum redderetur). He further exhorts you, in God's name, to show yourself ready to forgive offences, whether on the part of the people of Florence or of any one else; for if any offence has been given, it has been because men did not know that you had been sent by God. Remember, therefore, your Saviour, who, as He hung upon

the Cross, mercifully forgave His executioners. And if, O King, you observe these things, God will augment your temporal kingdom, and will everywhere make your arms victorious, and will at last confer upon you the everlasting kingdom of heaven."[1]

Such were his words as reported for us by himself, and they partly justify the plea, which he afterwards urged in self-defence, that his predictions with regard to Charles VIII. had been subject to conditions. But it is tolerably obvious that in the meanwhile the practical effect of his words would necessarily be to encourage the King in his undertaking, while the chances were that his warning would soon be forgotten. It is no doubt true that God can and does employ unworthy instruments for the unconscious working out of His own higher designs.

> "There is a providence that shapes our ends,
> Rough-hew them how we will."

But the very conviction that this is so, and that the ultimate issues of the best-laid schemes of politicians are so entirely hidden from our fore-view into the future, should teach—at least to those whose profession ordinarily holds them aloof from participation in such affairs—the lesson of extreme caution, and of extreme unwillingness to take upon themselves the task of interpreting and forwarding by such means the designs of God. Of course, if Fra Girolamo had received a genuine revelation to that effect that Charles VIII. of France was the divinely-appointed regenerator of Italy and of the Church, there is no more to be said. In this case, he only did the bidding of his Master, and no human critic has a voice in the matter. But the presumption, to say the least, appears to us to be entirely in favour of an explanation by natural causes such as we have suggested. For, in fact, the king did nothing, absolutely nothing, to justify the expectations which had been aroused by the preacher. The verification of these predictions of which "no iota" was to fail, was confined to the fact, and the momentary success, of an invasion which it required no seer to predict. And it is just possible that the prediction was one of those which tend to verify themselves by hastening the progress, if not the inception, of the events to which they refer.[2]

[1] *Compendium Revelationum*, pp. 240-42 (abridged).

[2] At Bologna, in 1496, one Raffaele da Firenzuola, "cum saepius fabularetur de regimine civitatis, et diceret Regem Franciae in Italiam ad castigandum tyrannos iterum adventurum," was arrested, examined under torture, and sentenced to perpetual banishment from Bologna (*Annales Bononienses*: Muratori, xxiii. 914). The rule of Giovanni Bentivoglio at Bologna was unquestionably

From a purely diplomatic point of view the embassy was, as even Nardi admits, of little importance.[1] But its arrival at Pisa, together with the news which he received from his friends in the city, made it clear to Piero that he had lost the confidence of the home government.[2] In the hopes, however, that his presence on the spot might turn the tide in his favour, he hastily returned to Florence on 8th November, and entered the city towards evening without encountering any opposition.[3] But when, on the following day, he attempted to enter the Palazzo of the Signory with an armed force, the door was closed in his face; and when he and his immediate followers made a futile attempt to raise the city in his favour, their shouts of "Palle! Palle!" (the rallying cry of the Medici) were drowned by answering shouts of, "Popolo e Libertà!" and the tumult quickly assumed proportions so alarming that Piero sought safety in a precipitate flight from the city.[4] He was accompanied by his brother, the Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici, who was disguised in the habit of a Franciscan friar.[5] It is the opinion of contemporary writers, by no means friendly to the Medici, that, with a little firmness and tact, Piero might still have held his own; but this was neither the first nor the last occasion in the course of his ignoble career on which he suddenly passed from the extreme of ill-timed self-assertion to the opposite extreme of poltroonery.[6] He had

tyrannical. But the civil government is after all entitled to protect itself against the subversive attempts of self-constituted prophets.

[1] "Si che ancora che il Frate parlasse molto efficacemente . . . questa ambasceria fu di poco momento" (Nardi, i. 28).

[2] Nardi, i. 31.

[3] "E a dì 8 di Novembre 1494, tornò qui in Firenze Piero de' Medici . . . e quando giunse in casa, gittò fuori confetti e dette vino assai al popolo, per recarsi benivolo, etc." (Landucci, *Diario*, p. 74).

[4] The stirring events of that Sunday evening are graphically described by Landucci. It was "while the bells were ringing for Vespers" that Piero attempted to enter the Palazzo. The people were summoned into the Piazza by the great bell of the Palace, tolling for a "Parlamento." "In un momento si cominciò a gridare in Palazio *Popolo e libertà*, e sonare a Parlamento, e gridare dalle finestre *Popolo e libertà*."

[5] "El povero Cardinale, giovanetto, si rimase in casa, e io lo vidi alle sue finestre colle mani giunte ginocchioni, raccommandandosi a Dio. Quando lo vidi m' inteneri'assai. . . . E veduto partire Piero, si disse che travestì come frate, e ancora lui se n'andò con Dio" (Landucci, *loc. cit.*).

[6] A crowd of unarmed citizens, says Nardi, called after him to take himself off ("che si dovesse andar con Dio"). "Onde ancor che egli di sua natura fusse animoso e gagliardo prese (non so come) tanto sbigottimento (secondo che piacque a Dio) che dalle grida di pochi disarmati che più con le parole col volto e co igesti e

hardly left the city when a decree of outlawry against himself and the Cardinal was passed by the Signory, and after the fashion of the time a price was set on both their heads.[1] It was only at the urgent demand of Charles VIII. himself that this sentence was commuted, a few days later, to one of simple banishment.[2]

In this *coup d'état* Fra Girolamo, who was not yet returned from his embassy, could, of course, take no part; nor is it in the least likely that he would have done so had he been present within the city walls. But after the event there could be no manner of doubt as to his sentiments regarding it. More than once he subsequently referred to the flight of Piero as a deliverance which the Florentines had owed to the special Providence of God. "It was God who relieved you of the presence of this 'strong man armed,'" he said, alluding to the Gospel parable (Luke xi. 21 *sqq.*); "let no one say, 'It was I who did it'; let no man boast of it and say, 'I was the cause of it.' For it was not he who had the strength to overthrow so great a power. But God was stronger than he; He has deprived him of his spoils, and of his own property, and has relieved you from his dominion over you."[3]

That the flight of Piero was indeed a deliverance, and that he ought, on no account, to be readmitted to the city, was clearly the prevalent feeling in Florence. Two days later, the mere rumour of an intended attempt on the part of de' Medici to effect his return called forth so large a crowd, and so violent an expression of popular feeling, that Landucci regards the false report as a providential circumstance which gave the emissaries of the king, who were already in the city, an opportunity of seeing for themselves what the Florentine people were capable of doing in an emergency.[4] But

con le becche de' cappucci, che altrimenti, lo spaventarono, ristretto in mezzo dei suoi staffieri si partì de piazza," etc. (Nardi, i. 33). The writer goes on to tell how the governor of the city prison was seized, and all his prisoners set free; and these, he says, were the first-fruits of the liberty which the city now regained after sixty years of slavery.

[1] Landucci, p. 75.

[2] Articles 16-20 of the treaty (*A. S. I.* i. 371 *sqq.*).

[3] Sermon on the third Sunday in Lent 1496.

[4] "Mai si vide simile unione, cosi presto, piccoli e grandi, con tante grida *Popolo e libertà* . . . per tal modo che fu permesso dal Signore che si facessi una tal pruova di questo popolo, in questo tenpo pericoloso de' Franciosi, che tuttavolta entravano in Firenze con cattivo animo di metter Firenze a sacco. E veduto un popolo a ordine di questa natura, mancorono di animo assai" (Landucci, 11th November).

while public sentiment was at this juncture so strongly opposed to Piero, there seems to have been comparatively little disposition to execute vengeance on his former friends and supporters. The palace of the Cardinal de' Medici was looted, with several other houses, and a very few of the more prominent Mediceans were arrested, but they do not appear to have suffered any serious penalty; and it is most remarkable that, on this occasion, hardly a drop of blood was shed.[1] It is probable, indeed, that the near approach of the French king, and the general sense of alarm, helped to mitigate the violence of factious hatred.[2] But contemporary writers are agreed that it was to the influence of Fra Girolamo, far more than to any other cause, that Florence owed, at this crisis of her affairs, the preservation of internal peace. And to his influence may probably be ascribed the generous measure of amnesty, on behalf of political exiles, which was passed at this time.[3]

Nor was this the only boon for which, about this time, the city was indebted to the great preacher. Although the warnings which he had addressed to Charles VIII. were forgotten only too soon after his departure from Florence, it is fair to attribute the comparatively good behaviour of his troops, while they were actually within the walls of Florence, in great measure at least to the impression made upon him by these warnings. And when the protracted sojourn of the vacillating monarch threatened to be the occasion of a tumult, it was Fra Girolamo who went to him once and again, and solemnly admonished him in God's name to go forward upon his expedition, and to relieve the Signory of the doubtful and dangerous honour—or rather of the well-nigh intolerable

[1] The sacking of the houses and several arrests are mentioned by Landucci (9th, 10th, and 12th November); but the only casualty recorded by him is the death of a servant of the governor of the city gaol, "che gridò Palle," and a bad wound which one of the Tornabuoni received in the course of the riot. Nardi explicitly says (i. 35): "Furon dette case saccheggiate interamente senza offesa d'alcuna persona." The looting was soon put a stop to, by order of the Signory (Landucci and Nardi, *loc. cit.*).

[2] "The sense of tremendous danger . . . fortunately subdued all dissensions among the different sections of officials," etc. (Oliphant, *The Makers of Florence*, p. 282).

[3] "E a dì 14 (Novembre) venerdi entrò Lorenzo di Piero Francesco de' Medici . . . e alcuni altri usciti e confinati, perchè avevano ribanditi tutti gli usciti dal trentaquattro (1434) in qua" (Landucci, p. 76; similarly Nardi, i. 35). This Lorenzo and his brother, cousins of Piero, were at enmity with him. They now assumed, says Nardi (i. 36), the name of Popolani, but in fact became supporters of the aristocratic party.

burden—of his presence.[1] And so, having entered the city on 17th November, he left it on the 28th of the same month, to the intense relief of all parties and classes.

And here we may depart somewhat from the chronological sequence of events. Leaving aside for the moment the consideration of the internal affairs of Florence, we may briefly indicate the nature of the subsequent relations of Fra Girolamo with the French king, and his attitude to the whole question of a French invasion. Charles VIII. had not been many months in Italy before Lodovico Sforza, who, on the death of Giangaleazzo had succeeded to the Dukedom of Milan, and was no longer in any danger from the side of Naples, saw reason to change his mind, or at least his policy. Venice saw its own independence threatened; the young king of Naples saw his opportunity in the condition of the French troops, already demoralised by their sojourn in Italy; the jealous fears of Spain and of the Empire lest the balance of power in Europe should be disturbed by the French successes in Italy were aroused; and the result was the conclusion of the "Holy League" of 31st March, 1495, for the ostensible purpose of the protection of Christendom against the Turk, and the maintenance of the rights of the Holy See and of the Empire, but having for its more immediate object the expulsion of "the barbarians" from Italy.[2] We have no wish unduly to extol the motives which actuated the members, and in particular the Italian members, of this "Holy" League. Exalted aims and noble actions were hardly to be looked for from men like Alexander VI. or Lodovico Sforza, or from the youthful Ferrante of Naples. Nevertheless, the immediate purpose of the alliance was objectively good and patriotic.[3] For, as Gregorovius has pointed out, an unique opportunity was offered to an united Italy at this

[1] Villari, i. 255.

[2] Pastor, iii. 336. "Der Turkenkrieg war der Vorwand dazu, der wirkliche in geheimen Artikeln ausgesprochene Zweck die Bekämpfung des französischen Eroberers" (Gregorovius, vii. 369). This League was the first of a long series of similar alliances, having for their object the maintenance of the balance of power in Europe, and it is with some justice that Gregorovius writes that from it the history of modern Europe takes its commencement.

[3] Speaking of the first months of the invasion, Gregorovius says: "So lamentable was the weakness of Italy in 1494, that a despot like Alfonso II. (of Naples) would have deserved the praise of having been its only patriotic prince, if only his motive for resistance had been a genuine patriotism" (vii. 338). In the meanwhile, Alfonso had abdicated in favour of his son, Ferrante II.

crisis of her history.[1] But Italy was not united. Florence and Ferrara stood aloof from the League; and when a second invasion seemed to be in contemplation, the Pope complained that the obstinacy of the Signory threatened to bring ruin on the whole peninsula.[2] That Florence and Ercole d'Este did thus stand aloof was due in no small measure to Fra Girolamo. The ambassadors of hostile Milan and of friendly Ferrara alike represent him as the principal opponent of the League; and the Bishop of Orvieto, the Papal envoy, bitterly reproaches the Signory with allowing its policy to be controlled by the Friar to its own great disgrace.[3] Tranchedino, in a letter to Sforza (9th November 1496), rather cynically suggests that the best remedy for this state of things will lie in the efforts of a rival preacher (da Ponzo) to convert the populace to the political views of the Duke of Milan.[4] Dr Luotto indeed is at pains to show that Savonarola did not openly preach against the League.[5] This, in a sense, is true, and the Friar's worst enemies acknowledge that he abstained from any explicit declaration on the subject.[6] But his words, though guarded, were plain enough to leave no doubt as to their meaning. The League was concluded on 31st March 1495, and was solemnly published on 12th April. Now, it was on 1st April of that year that Fra Girolamo communicated to his hearers that "Vision of the Lilies" which has been already recorded in these pages. It is true that when Fra Girolamo asked Our Lady (so he told his hearers) whether it were not fitting that the lesser lilies should combine with the greater, he received no direct reply to this question, but only some words of menace against those neighbours of Florence who spoke ill of her.[7]

[1] *Geschichte*, vii. 372-73.

[2] Manfredi to d'Este, 20th July 1496 (Cappelli, n. 84). It would, however, hardly be fair to blame Ercole d'Este for adhering to that policy of peaceful neutrality which was traditional in his family, and to which the Diarist of Ferrara frequently alludes. *E.g.* (Muratori, xxiv. 358), "Il Duca di Ferrara in questo tempo se ne stava in Ferrara in santa pace, et ogni dì cavalcava ora ad una ora ad un' altra Giesia ad udire Messa in canto, et lassava guerrezare a chi voleva."

[3] Tranchedino and Somenzi to Sforza (del Lungo, nn. 16, 19, 30); Manfredi to d'Este (Cappelli, nn. 81, 82).

[4] Un pari de frate Mariano, che intendo è ritornato là et ha comenzato a predicare anche lui con grande concorso, sarà meglior mezo, etc. (Tranch. to Sforza, 9th November 1496; del Lungo, n. 18).

[5] Luotto, cap. xx.

[6] Somenzi to Sforza, 28th October 1496 (del Lungo, n. 16).

[7] S. 29 on Job, Luotto, p. 345. *See* above, p. 62.

But a Florentine must have been blind indeed who did not see in the question itself an obvious allusion to the alliance of the lilies of Florence with the lilies of France; and such indeed was the interpretation unhesitatingly put upon it at the time.[1] True, Fra Girolamo subsequently declared that the people had misunderstood his vision of the lilies great and small.[2] But if Savonarola used language of the kind which we once heard described as "so ambiguous that only one construction could be put upon it," his apologists must not be surprised if it was then, and is now, construed accordingly. Again, Fra Girolamo might say, again and again: "Florence, I have not bidden you to enter into any league except with Christ,"[3] but when he added that he had explained to them for their better information, "who was the minister of Christ," all the world knew, as well as if he had said it plainly, that he meant no other than the King of France.[4] And indeed he was, as we have seen, ready enough to assure the king himself that, when he had spoken of a divinely-sent deliverer, it was Charles VIII., and none other, who had been thus designated.

Now, it is no doubt true that the wishes of a Pope—and more especially of such a Pope as Alexander VI.—in matters purely political, impose no obligation of obedience upon even the most devout of Christian statesmen as such; but Alexander had at least a right to demand that the pulpit should not be employed, and that the eloquence of a Dominican preacher should not be engaged, in fomenting opposition to his designs for the liberation and defence of Italy. He might, of course, be mistaken in his policy, but so might Fra Girolamo; and the Friar's persistent attempt to enforce his views by an appeal to his own special mission from the Almighty was, on any hypothesis, fraught with indefinite possibilities of danger, at least until his claims should be submitted to a competent tribunal.

The inglorious return of Charles VIII. from Naples and Rome without having moved a finger for the carrying out of the reforms which Savonarola had imagined that he would effect, might perhaps

[1] *E.g.* by the Chronicler Parenti: "Affermò come veduto avea i gigli insieme unirsi e del Rè di Francia ed il nostro" (Gherardi, p. 122).

[2] "O frate, tu hai pur detto: Gigli e gigli. Tu non lo intendi quello" (S. 19 on Ruth, Luotto, p. 348).

[3] Luotto, pp. 346, 347.

[4] "Bene e vero che ti ho detto qualche particolare, *e chi è ministro di Cristo*, per illuminarti" (S. 13 on the Psalms, Luotto, p. 347).

have warned him of the danger of over-confidence in the genuineness of his inspiration. The faith of some among his friends and admirers soon began to waver. Full of anxiety, the Duke of Ferrara wrote to Manfredi, his ambassador at Florence, in 1496, bidding him to enquire of Fra Girolamo what was now to be thought of the state of affairs. Was it still to be believed that an alliance with France, or at least abstention from the league against France, was in accordance with the designs of God, specially made known to the Friar? And what were those to do who, in Florence and elsewhere, had lived in expectation that the King of France would return to do the work of which Fra Girolamo had said so much? Savonarola replied, through Manfredi, that Italy was undoubtedly to be laid waste ("patire exterminio et gran ruina"), and likewise that the Church was undoubtedly to be reformed; that if the King of France did not undertake a second expedition this would be because such was the will of God; and that those who had lived in hopes of his return would have no reason to regret having entertained such hopes.[1]

A few months later Savonarola, consulted by Manfredi on behalf of his master on the subject of his relations with France, replies that he will pray for light. The result of this prayer is a confidential document or "polizza" to the following effect: "Our friend [*i.e.* the French King] is not utterly rejected by God (*non è repprobato*), but he is deceived by his advisers, and if he chooses he may yet do great things." It would be well to help him—*i.e.* in plain words, to induce him once more to invade Italy—by sending to him some prudent and trustworthy man who should open his eyes. Such an envoy ought to be a religious and prudent man, "and one who believes these things." "Your faith," he concludes, "has deserved that this secret of the Lord (!), in whom alone you should trust, should be made known to you." Now it is of course impossible to demonstrate, by any kind of *à priori* argument, that Fra Girolamo did not hold a divine commission to carry on negotiations of this kind with the princeling of Ferrara, and to inform him whether Charles VIII. was or was not "repprobato." But this much we may at least suggest, that before accepting the hypothesis of divine inspiration, it were well at least to try whether the facts are compat-

[1] Manfredi to d'Este, 28th April 1496 (Cappelli, n. 100). The Duke's letter, to which this is a reply, has not been preserved.

ible with the simple hypothesis of delusion. It is difficult to see what else, in substance, Savonarola could have answered if he had become uneasily half conscious of the failure of his predictions, and at the same time had been instinctively anxious to save his reputation as a true prophet. Is not this, after all, the real explanation of the matter? Had he not been disappointed in his hopes? and is not his correspondence with d'Este only one among several instances occurring in his life of the lengths to which self-deception can go?

The reader must judge for himself how far this explanation of the matter is or is not confirmed by the subsequent course of events. Meanwhile when Charles VIII., on his return from his rapid but abortive conquest of Naples, once more approached the neighbourhood of Florence, the greatest alarm again prevailed in the city; and indeed the circumstances were such as to justify the worst apprehensions. Already, while the king was still in Rome, a special embassy had been sent to urge upon him the fulfilment of certain promises embodied in the treaty of the previous November, and to warn him that the Signory and people of Florence would on no account tolerate the return of Piero, and that they would resist to the death any attempt upon their liberties.[1] Notwithstanding their warning, the king allowed Piero to accompany him on his march northwards; and when this was known, the city was hastily put in a state of defence.[2] The news of these preparations, and some words which the Florentine envoys addressed to him, with more perhaps of republican spirit than of diplomatic prudence, aroused his anger; and the danger of an open rupture, especially if he should attempt to pass through Florence, became imminent.[3] When Charles had reached Siena, with Piero still in his company, a fresh embassy was despatched with commission to enquire by what route his Majesty proposed to pass through the Florentine territory, in order that the Signory might make provision for the provisioning of his army. The king curtly told them that he would go by what

[1] Nardi, i. 62.

[2] Nardi, *ibid.* "E in questi dì tuttavolta si forniva d'arme la città, e ponevasi a ogni canto legni per potere isbarrare la città. Stava ogniuno in grandissimo sospetto e di mala voglia, perchè si stimava che'l Re ci voleva male" (Landucci, 12th June, p. 108).

[3] "E da nostri oratori avendo udite alcune parole più tosto gagliarde che savie, ne prese qualche sdegno" (Nardi, *loc. cit.*).

route he chose, and that they had better make provision everywhere.[1] It was under these circumstances that the Florentine government once more had recourse to Fra Girolamo, whose words, it was confidently believed, would be more efficacious than those of any other envoy who could possibly be chosen. Once more he accepted the commission, and went to Poggibonsi, on the road to Siena, to meet the king. The account of his embassy cannot perhaps be better given—with the view of setting forth his own ideas about it—than by setting before the reader an extract from the very characteristic sermon which he preached on his return.

"Here I am once more among you. You ask me: 'Father, have you brought us some good news?' Yes, good news; I bring nothing but good news. You know that in time of prosperity I brought you bad news, and now, in your tribulation, I bring nothing but good news. Good news for Florence! Bad news for other places! . . . 'Oh, but we want to know more, Father. Can you give us particulars?' Well, don't you think that it is a good piece of news that Florence has begun to return to a Christian way of living? For a good life is the truest happiness; and happiness is only to be found where men live well and fear God.

"I have been yonder in the camp, which is like being in hell . . . Do not ever allow yourself to desire to be a great lord, for such men never have an hour of true peace and happiness.

"Moreover, don't you think it a piece of good news that God has lifted the cloud from over you, and hast sent it over others? But you say: 'It is we who have caused it to move on.' This is just what I told you that you would say, attributing all to your own prudence. But I tell you now that your prayers have been the wind which has driven away this cloud. It is the hand of God which has done it all . . . 'But we want to know more, Father. You have been to the king. Have you nothing to tell us?' Nay, I was not your ambassador. I had no commission from the Signory or from the Ten, though I was asked to go by some friends. So, not having been sent by you, I have no occasion to report to you the results of my embassy. I have reported it to Him who sent me. But I will tell you this: I went, and I sowed good seed, which in its time will sprout and grow, and you shall gather the harvest and shall eat. 'Oh,

[1] Nardi, i. 63-4. Nardi and Landucci differ somewhat in their view not so much of the actual facts as of the motives at work. Landucci writes (14th June, p. 108): "Ogniuno pregava Iddio che non venissi per Firenze, e fumo esalditi da Dio." Nardi says, on the other hand: "Non volle pertanto venire il re a Fiorenza per lo sdegno preso," etc. *Pertanto!* as if one of the objects of Fra Girolamo's embassy had been to persuade him to come. This was not Savonarola's view when, on his return, he invited the people to thank God that the cloud had passed from them to others (che Iddio abbia levato il nuvolo d'addosso a te *e mandatolo addosso ad altri*); Villari and Casanova, *Scelta*, p. 160).

Father, this is a parable ; we want plain words.' Well, then, I will explain it.[1] I went on your behalf, and out of the love which I bear to you. Do you think I would risk my life were I not certain of the truth of the things which I tell you?

"I went to his Majesty, and I told him certain things which if he shall do it will be well with him—well for his soul and for his kingdom and for his subjects. I told him that he must stand well with Florence, and act well by Florence, and that if he would not do it for love, he should do it perforce ; that if he should so act it will be well with him, but woe to him if he does not so act ; and I told him in detail (though I will not tell you, for it is not fitting that I should) what will befall him. He heard me with kindness, and promised me to do what I bade him, and he promised it to you, and I tell you again that if he does not fulfil what he has promised *per amore*, he shall do it perforce. And it is God Himself, who speaks in me, who will make him do it. . . .

"This I say in conclusion, that God has opened His hand to this 'barber,' the King of France, and has given him all that he wanted in Italy ; but if he fails to do what I have told him, I tell you, and I would have all the world to know, that God will withdraw His hand. And if he fails to perform for the Florentines what I have bidden him to do, nevertheless we shall have everything, if not of his goodwill, then perforce. Meanwhile, our arms must be prayer and fasting."[2]

In view of these words Manfredi can hardly be said to have exaggerated when he wrote to d'Este that the Friar had preached a sermon in which "he assured this people that everything which he had recently promised and predicted on their behalf would undoubtedly come true (indubitatamente li succederia in effecto), explaining that he had found the king well disposed to the city."[3] But the months went by, and the expectations which the preacher had aroused were not realised, and we read, under date 5th February 1497, that "the Friar has begun to preach against the King of France, saying that he will come to grief (che'l capitarà male), because he had not carried out what God had commanded him, and because he has not fulfilled his promises to this people ; and that God has already punished him in part by having deprived him of sons, and by having made him lose his honour and reputation ; and

[1] In the sermon, as it stands, he postpones the explanation, and afterwards returns to the subject. We omit the intervening portion.

[2] S. 22 on the Psalms (Villari and Casanova, *Scelta*, pp. 160 *sqq.*). The word "barber" is an allusion to the "hired razor" of Isaiah vii. 20. It was one of Fra Girolamo's favourite predictions (and a remarkably true one) that God would send "many barbers" into Italy, of whom Charles VIII. was only the first.

[3] Manfredi to d'Este, 22nd June 1495 (Cappelli, n. 77).

that perhaps he will cause him to lose his kingdom and his life."[1] Are not these suspiciously like the accents of a disappointed seer, vexed at the failure of his own predictions, and hiding his vexation—from himself if not from others—under cover of fresh menaces against the author of his disappointment?

And what are these royal promises, the non-fulfilment of which was declared to have brought down the anger of God upon the head of Charles VIII.? One of the first results of the French invasion had been the revolt of Pisa from the dominion of Florence. Now the conquest of Pisa was one of the reputed glories of Florentine history; and it was very natural that its threatened loss should be deeply resented, and that the Republic should have negotiated with Charles to induce him to bring it once more into subjection, in consideration of a goodly subsidy, which was in fact duly paid in sundry instalments. On the other hand, the citizens of Pisa no doubt esteemed the boon of independence no less than the citizens of Florence, and the revolt of Pisa was an incident of somewhat similar character, as it precisely coincided in time, with the expulsion of the Medici from Florence.[2] Nor is it to be wondered at that rather than allow themselves to be sold—as they conceived it—to the Florentine Signory, the Pisans should have preferred to accept the protection of Venice, or some other powerful neighbour. What the rights and the wrongs of the quarrel between the two cities may have been we do not pretend to say; but common sense would at least suggest the extreme improbability that a local dispute of this nature

[1] *Sommario di lettere da Firenze* (Cappelli, n. 96). The faithlessness of Charles VIII., and the indignation excited by his repeated failure to perform his promises, are frequently referred to in Landucci's Diary.

[2] "The new Republic of Florence had soon to face the fact that revolutions do not come singly. The news was brought, that on the same day on which Florence expelled the Medici, Pisa had revolted from the Florentine yoke" (Creighton, iii. 189). This was one of several coincidences connected in various ways with the life of Savonarola, which marked the closing years of the fifteenth century. Another was the death of Fra Girolamo's friend, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, on the very day on which Charles VIII. entered Florence. A third was the murder of the Duke of Gandia (son of Alexander VI.) within a day or two of the publication of Savonarola's excommunication at Florence, and a fourth was the death of Charles VIII. only a few weeks before that of Fra Girolamo himself. Nor was Pisa the only town which revolted from Florence at this time. The little city of Montepulciano took the opportunity to transfer its allegiance to Siena, and it must be supposed that Montepulciano was likewise included in the things which were to be restored to Florence. Needless to say, Charles VIII. never restored Pisa.

should have been the subject of divine communications to Fra Girolamo or to any one else. Savonarola himself, however, betrayed no misgivings on the point. That Pisa should be again brought into subjection to Florence was part of the scheme of Providence as conceived by him. According to his prophetic gospel, God was deeply concerned about the liberties of Florence. The liberties of Pisa were, it would seem, a matter of quite secondary importance. And so we find this apostle of civic freedom pleading with Charles VIII. at Poggibonsi for the restoration of the lesser city to the obedience of the greater. And when, on his return after the embassy, he told the Florentine people that they should "have everything" from the French King, either *per amore* or by force, no one could doubt that "everything" included Pisa, and the contemporary chronicler Parenti can hardly be blamed if—giving the sense rather than the actual words of the preacher—he declares that Fra Girolamo promised his hearers that Pisa should be restored. Surely this was a matter which the Friar-ambassador might have left to be dealt with by secular politicians. And surely the plain truth is this, that as Fra Girolamo was deluded about himself and his own supposed divine mission, so he was also deluded about the importance of Florence in relation to the divine designs. The two forms of delusion were of a piece; and his flattery of his fellow-citizens harmonised well with his own unconscious self-flattery. It may indeed seem strange to speak of him as flattering a people whose vices he lashed with the unsparing scourge of the most terrible invective, but the preference so frankly given to Florence over Pisa as a special object of Divine Providence was flattery enough for a people whose pride assuredly needed no encouragement.

Our account, however, of the relations between Savonarola and Charles VIII. would be manifestly incomplete were we to leave out of account the letters which he wrote to the king. Of these, five have been preserved, one of which, however, as belonging to the closing months of his life, must be reserved for consideration hereafter. Of the other four, one is of considerable length, but is so entirely characteristic of the writer that it seems well to set forth its contents at some length :—

26th May 1495; Savonarola to Charles VIII.[1]—The love of God and zeal for His honour constrains me to love your Majesty (tua Corona)

[1] Villari, i. Append. pp. xcvii. *sqq.* The king was at this time in Rome.

and this all the more because I am assured (son certo) that among all other Christian princes God has made choice of you for the carrying out of this mystery of the renovation of the Church, of which a beginning has already been made.[1] I write, then, to admonish you of what is necessary for your salvation. For it is God's will that for the attainment of this end (viz. salvation) men should use the appropriate means; and so you, in particular, having been chosen by God to do a great work, must adopt suitable means for carrying it into execution. I remind you, then, that it was God Himself who in time past enlightened me concerning your arrival in Italy, and concerning the victory which you have gained; and on His part I declare to you that if you do not take measures to secure that your barons and ministers should act otherwise than as they have hitherto done, God will withdraw His hand, and will cause the people to rebel against you, and will bring you into great tribulations, and you and your army will incur the gravest danger. For it is not enough, in the sight of God, that you should yourself be of good will, and should abstain from evil doing; but it is your duty to correct and restrain your subjects from oppressing the people and cities (of Italy) and from extortionate practices. Remember the example of Saul, who, having been chosen by God, was afterwards rejected by Him. I warn you on the part of God Himself not to treat the Florentine people so. And I give you this warning, not principally for their sake—for I am a stranger among them—but for your own good, and for the honour of God.

If you had acted in accordance with the words which I addressed to you just before your departure for Florence, all would have been well with you, and the people would now be crying out: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Know, then, most Christian king, that it is God's will that the Florentines should be well treated by you, especially in view of the treaty to which you have sworn. Remember what God said of Sedecias, who violated his treaty with the heathen king Nebuchadnezzar: "Qui dissolvit pactum, numquid effugiet," etc.

Remember what I have heretofore declared to you by word of mouth, and in writing, viz. that the people of Florence are most loyal to you, with the exception of a small number who, in spite of the will of the majority, have pursued an opposite policy.[2] Notwithstanding all the efforts that are being made to detach them from you they remain faithful, *and this is mainly the result of our preaching*.[3]

It would be well for you if you would seek the good of the city, and not that of any private citizen, for such men seek their own advantage,

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[1] This beginning of the renovation of the Church was, of course, the reform effected at Florence itself.

[2] *I.e.* Piero de' Medici and his friends.

[3] "Tenelo (*i.e.* il popolo) disposto, a quel che si dice, alla volta di Franza, dimostrandogli che questo Re christianissimo omnino habbia a reformare la Chiesa et essere victoriorissimo in questa sua impresa," etc. (Manfredi to d'Este, 18th May 1495; Cappelli, n. 54).

and not yours, and they would be the first to desert you if the occasion should offer.[1] Remember how, whereas you have shown no sign of favour or love to the city, and whereas others have striven to bribe her to oppose you, she has stood firm in her loyalty, and will continue so to stand *with the help of our preaching and exhortations.* It is God's will that we should hold to our alliance with you, and you with us, and that under your protection her liberty and dominion (libertà et signoria) should prosper and flourish. For the divine goodness had determined to put down those tyrants and private citizens who seek to usurp authority over her, as they have done in the past; *for this new and popular government has been established by God, and not by man, and therefore He wills that it should prosper.*[2]

Once more, then, I warn you that if you do not act as I have said, God will send you such tribulations that you will be forced to do what of your own good-will you have not hitherto chosen to do. And the reason is, because *God has chosen this city, and has filled her with His servants, and has determined to magnify her and raise her up, and whoso toucheth her toucheth the apple of His eye.*[3]

All this I have written in the name, and at the bidding, and under the enlightenment of God. Do not allow yourself to be otherwise advised. *For what I have written is as true as the Gospel,* and any opposite counsel is to your hurt.

That Savonarola was the chosen prophet of God, Charles, His chosen king, and Florence His chosen people, these are the three notes which, like a fundamental chord in music, dominate the whole of his utterances at this time. But they nowhere make themselves so plainly heard as in the Friar's addresses and letters to the king.

The other three letters to which we have referred are undated, but belong to a somewhat later period than the one which has been given above. Omitting wearisome repetitions, their purport is briefly as follows :—

1. It was God who brought you to Italy, and it is He who has brought you safely back to your own country. Having experienced the truth of

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[1] Again he alludes to Piero who, it may be remembered, was at this time with the king.

[2] "E a dì primo d'aprile 1495, predicò frate Girolamo, e disse e testificò come la Vergine Maria gli aveva rivelato come la città di Firenze aveva ad essere la più groriosa (*sic*), la più ricca, la più potente chi ella fussi mai, dopo molte fatiche: *e promettevalo assolutamente.* E diceva tutte queste cose come profeta; e la maggiore parte del popolo gli credeva" (Landucci, 1st April 1495, p. 103). This is an outsider's view of the sermon of "The Lilies." Of "the new and popular government" we shall have to speak in the next chapter.

[3] Zech. ii. 8. A rather bold application to Florence of the words spoken by Zechariah of Jerusalem.

my predictions, you ought not to look for any other sign. I have never written to you but by His command. In God's name I bid you give back to Florence what belongs to her [*i.e.* especially Pisa]. It is because you have not done so that misfortune has overtaken you. But God is more prone to mercy than to justice. Therefore, if through evil-doing you have suffered, much more may you hope to prosper by doing what is right.

2. God illuminates the hierarchies of angels in such a way that the lower choirs, or orders, receive their enlightenment from the higher, and so downwards in gradation to men. And among men he enlightens the rest of the Church *by means of His elect. And as the lower angels believe the higher . . . so He wills that men should believe in His prophets*, when they are enlightened by them. Those who, with simplicity, have thus believed, have prospered and have gained life everlasting. Those who have not done so have been rejected by God, and have lost not only temporal life and possessions but also eternal. My words are not mine, but God's.

3. I greatly regret to hear of your troubles. But they were foretold. Do not think that it is by your own prudence that you have escaped from them. If you do not mend, I warn you that God will withdraw His hand from you. Think well of my words, and do not give ear to those who, seeking their own interests, advise you otherwise.[1]

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[1] Villari, i. Append. pp. cviii. *sqq.*

CHAPTER IX

THE FRIAR AND THE FLORENTINE CONSTITUTION

COMPARING Savonarola with S. Philip Neri, Cardinal Capecelatro wrote, in the first edition of his life of that Saint:—

> Philip's reformation succeeded better than Savonarola's, and was more lasting, because he kept it free from all alloy of civil or political reform; he trusted to its immense indirect influence on civilisation and government. Savonarola, on the contrary, combined and confused the two reforms, and thus limited and retarded both. It was not altogether his fault; the state of things in Florence was such that he could hardly avoid this combination. . . . He deemed himself compelled to combine and almost identify two causes in their very nature distinct, and saw the cause he loved perish in the overthrow of its ally.[1]

Whether in the latest edition of the same work the illustrious writer has seen reason to modify this particular paragraph we do not know; but to us at least it appears to embody a fair judgment on the case. On the one hand Savonarola's participation in the internal politics of the Florentine Republic, of which we have now to speak, was in some measure forced upon him. But while we recognise this, it is right and reasonable, on the other hand, to recognise and to lament that his action was not in all respects marked by that prudent reserve and self-restraint which in the saints of God is found to be not incompatible with a zeal as ardent—to say the least—as that of Fra Girolamo.

In his Nineteenth Sermon on Aggaeus, preached during the Advent of 1494, Savonarola gives a graphic account of the manner in which he had drifted—but always, as he alleges, under divine guidance—into the troubled waters of political life.

> "The Lord [he says] has driven my barque into the open sea . . . the wind drives me forward, and the Lord forbids my return. . . . I communed

[1] Capecelatro, *Life of S. Philip Neri* (*Eng. Trans.*) i. 261-62.

last night with the Lord, and said: 'Pity me, O Lord; lead me back to my haven.' 'It is impossible; see you not that the wind is contrary?' 'I will preach, if so I must; but why need I meddle with the government of Florence?' 'If thou wouldst make Florence a holy city, thou must establish her on firm foundations, and give her a government which favours virtue.' 'But, Lord, I am not sufficient for these things.' 'Knowest thou not that God chooses the weak of this world to confound the mighty? Thou art the instrument, I am the doer.' Then was I convinced, and cried: 'Lord, I will do Thy will; but tell me, what shall be my reward?' 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard.' 'But in this life, Lord?' 'My son, the servant is not above his master. The Jews made Me die on the Cross; a like lot awaits thee.' 'Yea, Lord, let me die as Thou didst die for me.' Then He said: 'Wait yet awhile; let that be done which must be done, then arm thyself with courage.'"[1]

These words, better perhaps than any others which we could quote, exhibit on the one hand the moral greatness of the man, his presentiment of coming trials, and his courageous readiness to face them, while on the other hand they lay bare the fundamental flaw of self-deception which, like a geological "fault," runs through every stratum of Savonarola's public action as preacher, as prophet, and as politician. For taking a part, and even in some sense a prominent part, in Florentine politics it would, we think, be well-nigh absurd to blame him. The circumstances of the time seem to us to have demanded that he should not stand altogether aloof. A priest is not by profession a fireman; but when the town is ablaze he must hand the buckets, or work the pumps, like any other citizen; and if no one is at hand to guide the proceedings, he must give the needful directions just as an officer of the brigade would do. The fault that may perhaps be found with Savonarola—and it was found with him in his own time—is that he did not know where to stop; that he suffered himself, according to his own metaphor, to drift too far upon the sea of politics, and then persuaded himself that his drifting was entirely due to heaven-born tides and breezes specially designed by Providence to shape his course.

While tracing, in the preceding chapter, the relations between Savonarola and Charles VIII., we have considerably anticipated the course of events within the city of Florence itself. It has been already seen that immediately after the flight of Piero de' Medici there had been a remarkable abstention from hostile measures against those among the citizens who were well known to have been

[1] S. 19 on Aggaeus (Creighton, *History of the Papacy*, iii. 219-20).

the most powerful supporters of himself and of his father Lorenzo. And while this wise moderation may in great measure be ascribed to the influence of Fra Girolamo, it was also largely due to the general alarm and excitement caused by the near approach of Charles VIII. But no sooner had the invader left the city than a new and very grave constitutional crisis arose.

Already, before the arrival of the French King, a large number of political exiles had been recalled, as has been said, to Florence. These were, for the most part, men of the party most hostile to the Medici, and, being now re-established in the city, they were naturally disposed to support any measure which should have for its object the expulsion of the more prominent Mediceans, or even the shedding of their blood.[1] On the other hand, Piero de' Medici himself was actively pushing his interests with Charles VIII., and the king's agents were continually urging the Signory to allow him to return.[2] But, if he should return, it was not merely the restoration of a now unpopular *régime* which was to be feared, but the certainty that he would find means to wreak terrible vengeance on those who had been instrumental in his expulsion, or who had incurred his hatred by their subsequent action. Under these circumstances it would seem that two things were desirable from the point of view of a true and enlightened patriotism; on the one hand, to make provision against the possibility, at least for the present, of Piero's return, and on the other hand, to dissuade the personal enemies of Piero from venting their wrath upon his former adherents. And this latter point was pre-eminently one which might well invite the most earnest and strenuous efforts of a Christian preacher. That Savonarola did exert himself, and with conspicuous success, to this effect is the ungrudging testimony of the historian Guicciardini. After the execution of one Antonio di Bernardo, he tells us, other victims would surely have been sacrificed to gratify political hatred were it not that Savonarola loudly and earnestly proclaimed from the pulpit that now was the time not for justice but for mercy; and elsewhere he speaks in the very highest terms of his unsparing and successful efforts to preserve

[1] "Erano nella città molti che arebbono voluto percuotere Bernardo del Nero, Niccolo Ridolfi, Pier Filippo (Pandolfini), messer Agnolo (Niccolini), Lorenzo Tornabuoni, Jacopo Salviati, e gli altri cittadini dello Stato vecchio" (Guicciardini, *Storia Fiorentina*, p. 122).

[2] Nardi, i. 47.

the people of Florence from the folly and wickedness of factious vengeance.[1] Nor did Fra Girolamo desist from his counsels of peace until, in March 1495, a measure of general amnesty was finally passed.[2]

In the meanwhile, however, the city needed something more than an amnesty. The government which was appointed immediately after the departure of Charles VIII. was of a provisional character, and it failed from the very outset to command general confidence, so that some measure of constitutional reorganisation became a matter of necessity. In this reorganisation Fra Girolamo took, as will presently appear, a very prominent part.

The Florentine notion of liberty was not precisely what we understand, however vaguely, by the term. Liberty to a respectable citizen of Florence meant something more substantial than freedom from oppressive burdens and irksome restrictions, something more than the mere absence of positive obstacles calculated to hinder a private individual from aspiring, if he were so minded, to take part in the government of the city. He wished, not merely to have a vote in the election of his representatives, nor again merely to be himself theoretically eligible for any position of trust for which his

[1] "Men," says Guicciardini, "like Piero Capponi, and Francesco Valori were opposed to vengeful measures; but so many influential citizens were in favour of them, and the turbulent populace (a chi piacciono tutte le novità e travagli) were so strongly inclined to them, that such measures would almost certainly have been passed but for the influence of Fra Girolamo" (pp. 121-22).

[2] The successful efforts of Fra Girolamo on behalf of peace and concord during the interval are attested by Parenti, by the letters of Manfredi to d'Este, and by the Diary of Landucci, the chief sources of strictly contemporary evidence for this period. On 20th December Manfredi writes that there is fear of a commotion in the city, but that "el nostro Fra Hieronimo se affaticha quanto el pò con ricordi et opere amorevole . . . al quale è dato molto credito, ma non tanto quanto bisognaria da omni homo." He seeks only the common good, union, and peace (Cappelli, n. 29). On the 21st Landucci refers to the same danger: "Tuttavolta si stava in tremore che non s'accordavano e cittadini. Chi la voleva lessa e chi arosto, chi andava secondo el Frate e chi gli era contro; *e se non fussi questo Frate, si vieniva al sangue*" (*Diario*, p. 93). On 17th January: "Predicò F. Girolamo e molto s'impacciava di questa pace e unione de' cittadini" (p. 97). Finally, on 16th, 18th, and 19th March he records how: "Si praticava la pace de' cittadini," and how the pacificatory measure was successively passed (1) by the *Collegio*, (2) by the *Ottanta*, and (3) by the *Consiglio Maggiore*. "E disse la petizione che non si riconoscessi fatti di Stato dal dì della cacciata di Piero di Medici, etc." (p. 103). It was immediately after this that Fra Girolamo delivered those sermons concerning his embassy to the Queen of Heaven (25th March and 1st April) which mark the very flood-tide of his hopes and aspirations for Florence.

abilities might fit him. It was his ambition to enjoy, in his own individual person, at least a short spell of real office, to have his own individual finger, for at least a brief space, in the pie of actual administration. To compare small things with greater, it was as if in some modern English hamlet it had come to be the understood thing that every tradesman in the place should have his turn as a member of the parish council, and that every member of this body should from time to time be appointed on one or other of the local committees. Not that the ideal of which we have spoken was ever fully realised in Florence; and there were always those who wished to see the distribution of the civic offices restricted according to their own notions of what constituted respectability. But to a much greater extent than might easily be imagined these offices were always within the reach of a relatively large number of citizens; and the general desire to have in one's time a turn of office is reckoned with by writers like Guicciardini and Giannotti as natural to a free citizen, and as a tendency which, while it needed to be kept in check, must also be reckoned with in any scheme of civic polity.[1] The recognition on all hands of the reasonableness, within limits, of this desire accounts for what to the modern mind appear the two most remarkable features of the Florentine constitution. In the first place, all the magistracies changed hands every few months, and, secondly, in most elections the drawing of lots formed an essential part of the proceedings.[2]

The administration was in the hands of a number of Committees, or Boards, the first place among which was held by the *Signoria*, consisting of the *Gonfaloniere di Giustizia*, or Chief Magistrate, and eight *Priori delle Arti*, or representatives of the City Companies, or Trades, of whom two were chosen from each of the four quarters or

[1] In any project of government, says the spokesman in one of Guicciardini's *Discorsi*, two ends must be kept in view. The first is, that all, rich and poor, without distinction, should equally enjoy the protection of the laws. "Il secundo fine . . . è, che i beneficii della Republica, cioè gli onori e gli utili publici che ha, si allarghino in ognuno quanto si può e in modo che tutti i cittadini ne participino il più che sia possibile" (*Discorso* i., *sulle Mutazioni*, etc., *Opere Inedite*, ii. 238. Similarly *Discorso* iii., p. 276; *cf.* Villari, i. 241).

[2] *E.g.* under the reformed constitution the nominations for the various magistracies were made by electors whose names were drawn by lot. The voting was for or against the persons thus nominated (Guiccardini, *Storia Fiorentina*, p. 125). In his two first *Discorso* the same author makes two spokesmen debate a point which turns on the relative preponderance of the sortilege or of the majority of votes in two rival schemes of an elective process.

districts of the city. The Signory was appointed for a period of two months, and re-election within certain limits of time was precluded by law. Its authority was limited, in practice, by that of the Board of Ten, the *Dieci di Libertà*, appointed every six months, to whom belonged the administration of foreign affairs, whether of war or of peace. There was, besides, a Board of Eight, the *Otto di Balia*, whose function was the administration of criminal, and to a great extent of civil justice, and who held office for a term of four months. Along with the Signory there sat, as consultative assessors, the sixteen *Gonfalonieri delle Compagnie*, *i.e.* the captains of the city militia, and twelve *Buoni Uomini*, or *Procuratori del Palazzo*, appointed for this purpose. These, together with the Signory, formed the *Collegio*.

It is obvious that such a form of government, whatever its advantages, must necessarily have had very serious drawbacks, and it might seem as if the frequent changes of administration must have been fatal to the carrying out of any consistent line of policy. This difficulty, as we shall have occasion to see, was fully recognised by some of the shrewdest men of the time. A partial safeguard, however, against the arbitrary use of so brief a tenure of power lay not only in the traditions of the past, and in a kind of patriotic loyalty to the city, which seems to have been maintained even in the midst of party strife, but also in a certain practical responsibility to the elective body.[1] And the history of Florentine politics is, in large measure, the history of the various schemes devised under varying circumstances for the establishment of a satisfactory system of election.[2] Behind all such schemes and systems lay, as the court of ultimate appeal at critical moments, the Parlamento or general assembly of the people in the Piazza, to which they were summoned by the tolling of the great bell of the Palazzo. Again and again in the history of the republic, from the old times of the Guelfs and Ghibellines downwards, the city was rent by factions; when matters came to a crisis a Parlamento was called; dictatorial power—termed *Balia*—was conferred for a specified period either on the Signory for the time being, or else on some special committee of

[1] "It is difficult to say which side, when in power, ruled best. Both sides had a certain dogged regard for the city, and desire to enrich and adorn and make her great" (Oliphant, p. xviii.). Again, it is important, Guicciardini urges, that the city magistrates should not be beholden to any individual or to any faction, but should be responsible to a large body of electors (*Discorso* iii., pp. 268 *sqq.*).

[2] Guicciardini, *Storia Fiorentina*, pp. 1, 6, 7, 14, etc.

public safety nominated by the victorious faction; and then in virtue of this dictatorial power the chiefs of the vanquished party were banished, and new measures were enacted to establish what for the moment appeared a more suitable mode of appointment of the city magistrates.[1] But through all these changes the name and form of these magistracies was maintained, and thus a very real continuity is found in the history of the Florentine republic in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. By measures which it is not necessary here to specify in detail, Cosimo and Lorenzo de' Medici had contrived so to control the appointments to the administrative offices of the State that while they were too wise to seek to exclude their political opponents from all share in the government, they were at least always assured of a working majority on the Boards. To this end, Lorenzo had secured, through the vote of a Parlamento, that the appointment of the Signory and the other greater magistracies should be in the hands of a Council of Seventy, of whom the greater number were his own adherents.[2] And thus, while Cosimo and Lorenzo had been able to deal with the princes of Italy on a footing of equality, everything had been done in the name of the Signory, of whom they had been in theory the deputed spokesmen, but, in reality, the masters. But now, after Piero's flight, and the departure of Charles VIII., everything was in confusion.[3] Now, as before, the continuity of the form of government was maintained unbroken. The Signory was still in office, and no one proposed to abolish the *Dieci di Guerra e Pace*, or the *Otto di Balia*, or the *Dodici Buonuomini*, or the *Gonfalonieri delle Compagnie*. But the *Settanta*, the Medicean Council, was discredited, and on 2nd December a Parlamento swept it away as a Parlamento had erected it twenty-three years before.[4] In its place a committee of twenty *Accoppiatori* was established, who, for a period of twelve months, were to have the appointment of the Signory and the Ten and the Eight, and who were, in particular, to take such measures as might seem to be necessary to prevent the return of Piero de' Medici.[5]

[1] Instances occurred, for example, in 1393, 1433-34, and 1458 (Guicciardini, *loc. cit.*).

[2] Gino Capponi, in *A. S. I.*, i. 317, where the text of the Provisioni whereby the Settanta were appointed, is given in full (pp. 321); Villari, i. 236.

[3] "E come fu partito (il rè), sendo la città disordinata, si volsono gli animi a riformare lo Stato" (Guicciardini, *Storia Fiorentina*, p. 120).

[4] Landucci, p. 89.

[5] Landucci, *ibid.*; Guicciardini, *loc. cit.*; Pitti, p. 34. That they were expected to secure the city against Piero seems to be implied by Nardi, i. 66.

The Accoppiatori were chosen, and the new magistrates were appointed by them on the following day (3rd December).[1] It was felt that at least a first step had been taken in the direction of good order and government, and that the occasion was one for rejoicing. On Monday, 8th December, at the recommendation of Fra Girolamo, a public procession was held "in thanksgiving to God for benefits received."[2] But Fra Girolamo himself was shrewd enough to perceive that, although there was much to be thankful for, much yet remained to be done; and his views on the situation are expressed in the very remarkable sermon which he preached on Saturday, 6th December. It is one of his most characteristic discourses, and the reader will not fail to observe the abrupt transitions from purely spiritual topics to political themes. The suddenness of these transitions is not due to our own process of summarisation, but is equally marked in the full text of the sermon as published:—

"'Sing to the Lord a new song, for He hath wrought wondrously' (Ps. xcvii. 1). We have completed our Ark, and have entered it, and have passed safely through the beginning of the deluge. And now, as Noe might have addressed those who were with him in the Ark, so I say to you that you owe to God a deep debt of gratitude. Now, gratitude is to be shown in three ways. First, by recognising that our deliverance is due to God; secondly, by praising Him for having delivered us; thirdly, by making Him some return. And as we cannot make Him a return which is worthy of Him, we must, at least, give Him what He asks of us, our hearts' love. 'Son,' He says, 'give Me thy heart.'

"Moreover, the flood is not yet past. It has only commenced. Therefore, we must perform works of mercy in order to propitiate God, and secure His help in the troubles that are yet to come.

"Remember that after the Flood the world, purified thereby, entered on a new stage of its history. So, by means of this flood, God desires to renovate His Church.

"Whoever wishes to act wisely must set before himself, in the first place, the love of God, which must expel self-love and merely human fears. Unfortunately, many in our time, even of those most highly placed (i gran maestri), have lost the love of God, have their hearts set on earthly things, and are sunk in vice, so that they are become blind, and have lost the guidance even of the natural light of reason in the practical conduct of affairs, and so they have recourse to astrology and superstitious

[1] Landucci, p. 90.

[2] Landucci, *ibid.* Pitti remarks (p. 35) that the common people, who knew very little about constitutional liberty, imagined that they had now gained it, but that "alcuni de' più savii e più affezionati alla repubblica" thought otherwise.

practices. And this is the case not merely with seculars, but even with priests and prelate.

"But do you, O Florence, seek to renew your understanding by having recourse to God, and have no fear of Cyrus or of any other instrument of His designs. Thank God for having preserved you so far, and trust Him to bring you safely through all future troubles.

"You have changed your form of government, but if you wish your polity to endure, you must change your manner of life, you must sing to the Lord 'a new canticle.' *The first thing that you must do is to pass a law which will secure that henceforth no one shall be able to make himself supreme in the State* (farsi capo); otherwise you are only building on sand. . . . But, above all things, remember that if your laws are to be good, they must be founded on the law of God, for the observance of which the grace of the Holy Spirit is necessary.

"I have told you that whereas God has prepared a great and universal scourge, nevertheless, He loves you, and wishes you well: 'Misericordia et veritas obviarerunt sibi, justitia et pax osculatae sunt.' God wishes to save you, and to save you *for Himself:* 'Salvabit *sibi* dextera ejus.' Let no one imagine that he can aggrandise himself so as to be able to say, 'Florence is my city.' Florence is God's city; therefore, if you wish to consult for the welfare of Florence, consult God first in prayer, and come to your debates after having first confessed and communicated. It has been said (viz. by Lorenzo de' Medici) that states cannot be governed by paternosters, but this is the saying of a despot, not of a true prince. Despots govern after this godless fashion, but their rule is of short duration. Live, then, like Christians, and come to the sermons which will teach you so to live. Whoso will not hear the word of God offends God, and gives scandal. Therefore, come, all of you, and let the more distinguished among you be the first to set a good example to the rest. *If you be thus well grounded in the fear of God, He will give you grace to find a good form of government, one which will make it impossible for any one to usurp authority* (inalzare il capo), *either after the manner of the Venetians or in some other manner, as God may inspire you. As for other measures, which may be necessary for good government, and for the administration of justice, we might speak of them if it should please the citizens that we should deliver an exhortation in the palace.*[1]

"Humility, charity, and simplicity—these are the three things which I must especially recommend to you. Choose for your magistrates those who show their humility by their unwillingness to be brought forward (che fuggono lo stato per umiltà). If you see that they are fit for office, choose them in spite of themselves, for they will be more enlightened than the proud. Choose again, men who are truly charitable, and who

[1] "Se e cittadini si contenteranno che se ne faccia qualche esortatione in palazzo." These words, in which Fra Girolamo gives so broad a hint that he would like to be invited to speak his mind in the Palazzo, have been omitted, strange to say, by Villari and Casanova.

will be disposed to mitigate the burden of taxes, etc. And as for simplicity, you must learn to live more sparingly, and without so much pomp and ceremony. Then you will become truly wealthy, and will have the means necessary for the carrying on of your wars, and for the defence of the city.

"Let the rich give to the poor out of their superfluity, and let priests set the first example. And you nuns, too, must contrive to do without so many knick-knacks (cosuccie). And to you poor I say, if you wish to be helped, be good and behave well, and God will help you. Do not accept alms unless you be really in need. If you can support yourselves by work, you are bound to do so, and to accept alms when you can earn your livelihood would be an injustice."[1]

It is worthy of note that the portion of this discourse which seems to have made the deepest impression on men not specially interested in political questions was the appeal for alms.

"On Saturday, 6th December [says Landucci], Fra Girolamo preached and arranged for a collection on behalf of the 'poveri vergognosi' (*i.e.* the 'respectable' poor, the class who will starve rather than beg) and it was made in four churches . . . on the following day. And the amount collected, in money and materials, was incredible, with such love and charity did every one give."[2]

On 8th December, in connection with the procession above-mentioned, a second collection was made, and it amounted, says Landucci, to not less than that of the previous day. On 10th December Manfredi writes to d'Este an enthusiastic account of the popularity which Savonarola enjoys, and of the immense quantity of alms, estimated at six or seven thousand ducats, which he has collected for the poor:—

"Questo nostro frate Hieronimo Savonarola ha tanto credito et gran concorso in questa città, che è una stupendissima cosa; ha facto di molte bone proviggione per subvenire alli poverhomini di questa città et contrada, che molti et infiniti ve ne sono. Ha trovato elimosine da questi Signori tra di danari grani et altre cose che ascendono al valore de cinque on (*sic*) sei milia ducati. *Lo e adorato e riverito come Sancto;* et invero le bone opere sua li fanno havere questo bon credito in questa città."[3]

But the passage in Fra Girolamo's discourse of 6th December which was destined to have the most enduring and far-reaching effects was that in which he had hinted at a revision of the constitution, and at the introduction of a form of government after the

[1] Villari and Casanova, *Scelta*, pp. 127 *sqq*.

[2] *Diario*, p. 90. We have not translated literally, but have given the substance of the entry under 6th December.

[3] Cappelli, n. 27.

manner of the Venetians. The appointment of the Accoppiatori was of its nature provisional; but it is extremely improbable that any immediate measure would have been taken towards the bringing about of a more radical change, had it not been that the matter was warmly taken up by Pagolantonio Soderini; and Guicciardini gives it as a matter of common report that it was Soderini's exclusion from the Board of Twenty which prompted him to move the question of a change of government at so early a date.[1] It is probable that his views were already well known when Fra Girolamo delivered this sermon from which we have just quoted; and the preacher's words appear to allude to the question as one which had already been publicly bruited. But if we may trust Guicciardini, whose account is confirmed by Nardi, no definite proposal was brought before the Collegio till after Savonarola had prepared the way by his utterances in the pulpit.[2] At any rate it is certain that to these two men, Soderini and Fra Girolamo, the course which events actually took was mainly due.

In the course of the very next week the question of a new constitution formed the subject of protracted but fruitless debates in the Palazzo; and it was then that Savonarola, in his famous thirteenth sermon on Aggaeus, delivered on Sunday, 14th December, opened his mind more fully on the subject.[3] In this discourse,

[1] "Maravigliossi la brigata che in questa elezione fussi rimasto adrieto Paolantonio Soderini . . . in modo che si disse poi publicamente che per questo sdegno Paolantonio per mutare lo Stato persuase a Fra Girolamo e lo adoperò per instrumento a predicare, si facessi il Governo del popolo" (Guicciardini, *Storia Fiorentina*, p. 121). In the *Storia Fiorentina* Guicciardini writes "Paolantonio," but elsewhere he uses the form "Pagolantonio," which seems to have been more common among his contemporaries.

[2] "Cominciò a predicare per parte di Dio . . . che Dio era quello che aveva liberato la città della tirannide, e che Dio voleva si mantenessi libera, e si riducessi a uno Governo populare alla Viniziana. E con tanta efficacia . . . ci si riscaldò su, che benchè dispiacessi assai a Bernardo Rucellai . . . e altri primi del Governo, pure non opponendosi scopertamente, e sendo questa opera favorita dalla Signoria, *si cominciò a tenerne pratica*" (Guicciardini, *Storia Fiorentina*, p. 124). Pitti, on the other hand (p. 35), declares that after Soderini had proposed his plan "in una pratica di riforma," and had met with much opposition, he conferred with Fra Girolamo, and induced him to preach in favour of the plan. The two accounts may be in a manner reconciled if we place the "pratiche di riforma" in the week which intervened between Saturday, 6th December, and Sunday, 14th December.

[3] Cinozzi (p. 20), followed by Burlamacchi, speaks of the debates as lasting "alle cinque e sei ore di notte," which in December would mean till 10 or 11 P.M. and not, as Mr Horner, Villari's English translator, absurdly renders it, "till five or six in the morning."

which was attended by the Signory and all the magistrates, and to which men only were admitted, he entered frankly and unreservedly on the exposition of a constitutional programme.[1] He took for his text the words: "Receive instruction, ye that judge the earth: serve ye the Lord with fear" (Ps. ii. 10, 11). The rule of one man is best, he declared, when the prince is good, but when the prince is a bad man it is the worst form of polity that could be devised. Moreover, in choosing a polity, regard must be had to the character of the people to be governed. Elsewhere, the government of one man might be for practical purposes the best, "but in Italy, and especially in Florence, where both strength and intellect abound, where the people are subtle in mind, and restless in spirit, the government of one must become tyrannical." The consequence is not quite obvious, but to Fra Girolamo all is clear. Woe, then to Florence, if she should once more become subject to a tyrant! "Tyrant is the name of one who leads a wicked life, more wicked than all others, an usurper of other's rights, a destroyer of his own soul and of that of the people"; and therefore, the first thing to be done was to close the door once and for all time against a despotism. Then, adroitly if unconsciously mingling flattery with counsel, the preacher continued:—

"Purify your minds, attend to the common weal, forget your private interests; and if by such a course you reform your city, it will be rendered more glorious than it has ever yet been. And you, the people of Florence, will in this way commence the reform of all Italy, and will spread your wings over the world, bringing reformation to all nations (!). Remember that the Lord has shown clear signs that He desires a renovation of all things, and that you are the people who have been elected to begin this great work."

After laying down the two principles that the law of God is the foundation of all good government, and that the aim of every polity should be the general good of all, he comes at last to the practical point, viz. that for the city of Florence here and now a Great Council "after the manner of the Venetians," will afford the best and most secure basis for the new constitution.

[1] "E questa mattina, che fu domenica, predicò, e non volle donne ma uomini, e volle e Signori, che non rimase se none el Gonfaloniere e uno de' Signori in Palagio, e fuvvi tutti gli Uficj di Firenze" (Landucci, p. 92). On Sunday, 21st December, and again on 28th December, we find the entry "predicò, e ancora non volle donne" (pp. 93, 94). Landucci estimates Fra Girolamo's audience on these days at from 13,000 to 14,000 persons.

"A Great Council is the best form of government for this city, one similar to that in Venice. . . . And you need be in no degree ashamed to imitate it, for they received it from God, from whom every good thing comes. You may have seen that, ever since that government existed in Venice, there has been no strife or dissension of any kind; it is impossible, therefore, to escape the conclusion that it is in accordance with the will of God." [1]

Pagolantonio Soderini, who in the course of an embassy to Venice, had learned to esteem very highly the constitution of that Republic, was, as has been said, the leading advocate of the scheme of a Great Council after the Venetian model. The principal opponent of the measure was Guidantonio Vespucci, who represented that so large a consultative body, of which the majority must necessarily consist of men who had little or no practical experience of political affairs, would prove both unwieldy and incompetent. His own preference was for a more aristocratic or oligarchical form of polity, a *governo stretto* according to the political terminology of the day, such as had prevailed in pre-Medicean times.[2] At the outset, he seems to have had the support of a majority in the Collegio, for the leading families in Florence were naturally opposed to a measure which would throw open the highest magistracies to men who would otherwise aspire to them in vain, and who, as they believed, or affected to believe, would surely prove themselves unequal to the task of administration.[3] But Savonarola's eloquent advocacy of the Great Council had made a deep impression. In his great sermon on the third Sunday of Advent (14th December), Savonarola had proposed that each bench of the magistracy should draw up a scheme of government, and that these various schemes should be laid before the Collegio.[4] This was done on 19th December, and the plan proposed by the Ten, of whom Soderini was the most distinguished

[1] Villari and Casanova, *Scelta*, pp. 75 *sqq.*

[2] The speeches of Soderini and Vespucci are given *in extenso* by Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, i. 200 *sqq.*, 207 *sqq.*; ed. Milan, 1803. Whether they are taken from the official reports of a debate, or are imagined by Guicciardini, we do not know. Probably the latter.

[3] Speaking of Soderini's proposal Pitti writes (p. 34): "Il che fu aspramente da' principali cittadini impugnato, desiderosi di conservarsi uno stato ristretto." Cinozzi (p. 20) represents the opposition as so strong that it seemed certain to prevail.

[4] This is what was actually done, as will appear; but, in fact, Savonarola's suggestion was slightly different. The sixteen Gonfalonieri delle Compagnie were each to draw up a plan. Four of these were to be selected for presentation to the Signory, and for a final choice (Villari and Casanova, *Scelta*, pp. 86-87).

member, and no doubt the spokesman, was more favourably received than any other. The main provision of this scheme was the appointment of a Consiglio Grande (or *Consiglio Maggiore*, as it is called in official documents) of some 1500 members, which was to be summoned once a week, and of a lesser Council of Eighty, whose members were to be ready to assemble as often as the Signory should require their advice.[1] Savonarola was then invited to speak at the palace, where he warmly advocated the adoption of Soderini's plan, which was finally carried on 23rd December.[2]

The Great Council, it should here be explained, was by no means a purely democratic body. It was to consist at the outset of those only who had themselves held, or whose immediate ancestors had held, either by actual or honorary tenure, one of the greater magistracies.[3] But at the commencement of each year, its numbers were to be reinforced by the elective co-optation of sixty new

[1] Along with the Ottanta sat the Signory, the Ten, and other magistrates who might be collectively invited. The whole assembly thus formed was called the *Consiglio de' Richiesti*, whose members were analogous to the *Pregati* of Venice (*cf.* Nardi, i. 51).

[2] "Fu commesso a' Gonfalonieri, a' Dodici, a' Venti, a' Dieci, agli Otto, che ognuno ordinassi *un modo di vivere populare*. La quale cosa sendo fatta, e piacendo piu quello de' Dieci, fu mandato per Fra Girolamo, al quale fu letto questo modo; e lui avendolo approvato con parole savie . . . si vinse e approvò" (Guicciardini, *Storia Fiorentina*, pp. 124-25). It would seem from this that any proposal for the establishment or maintenance of a "governo stretto" had already been vetoed. The text of the law of 23rd December is given in the Appendix to Guicciardini, *Del Reggimento di Firenze*, pp. 228 *sqq.* The final provision for the weekly meetings of the Consiglio Maggiore was enacted on 14th May 1495 (p. 232).

[3] In a Florentine election the first stage was the selection, by voting or rotation, of a number of names which were to be "imborsati," or put into a bag for the drawing of lots. The lots were, so to say, "drawn double," *i.e.* the number drawn was double the number of the seats to be filled. Out of the names so drawn half were selected by elective voting. The man who actually obtained the seat on whatever Board might be in question was said to have been *seduto* in that office. His companion, who missed the appointment, was *veduto*. He had been "seen," his name had been mentioned, in connection with it, and this was held to be an honourable distinction. It was as if to have been next on the poll to the successful candidate at a parliamentary election were to entitle the person so placed to some privilege, immunity, or franchise. This legal fiction seems to have originated in the time of the Medici. Ambitious parents, says Giannotti, would strive that their names, and the names of their sons, might at least be "imborsati" for the drawing by lot, so that when the election (from among the names thus drawn) was made, even though they were not actually chosen they might at least have been "veduti" (Giannotti, *Della Repubblica Fiorentina*, quoted by Villari, i. 286).

members.[1] Its primary function was elective. Its establishment was, in fact, one among many plans which from time to time were devised for the purpose of securing suitable appointments to the magistracies. But it was also to exercise legislative authority. All new measures of importance were in the first instance to be discussed by the Signory or the Collegio, then, if passed by them, to be submitted forfurther debate to the Ottanta, or Consiglio de' Richiesti, and finally to be referred for confirmation or rejection (but without discussion) to the Consiglio Maggiore.[2]

Of the fiscal legislation which followed the laying of these foundation-stones of the new constitution it is not necessary here to speak. But with the decree of general amnesty, which has already been mentioned, and which was not carried until 19th March, there was linked another measure of which something must here be said, for it involved Fra Girolamo in a long and bitter controversy with a rival preacher.

Savonarola was deeply convinced that a remission of pains and penalties to which men might be held liable for past political offences would be of comparatively little avail unless provision was made against the abuse of justice under the influence of any sudden outburst of factious hatred in the future. He therefore proposed that in all graver criminal cases an appeal should lie from the sentence passed by a two-thirds majority of the Signory or the Otto to the lesser Council of the Ottanta. This was called the law of appeal from the *sei fave*, or "six beans"; for the voting at Florence was conducted by means of "beans," and as the Signory consisted of nine members, six votes were always required for a capital sentence.[3]

It may seem strange, at first sight, that such a measure should have met with any kind of opposition, and it is to be feared that the motives which prompted the opposition which it actually did encounter were not of a very exalted character. Parenti, who has left a very

[1] Law of 23rd December in Guicciardini, *Del Reg.*, p. 228.

[2] An instance of this is found in Landucci, 16th, 18th, 19th March 1495 ("Vinsesi tra' Signori e Colegi . . . si vinse nell' Ottanta . . . si vinse nel C. M.," pp. 102-3).

[3] "Confortò . . . perchè ognuno più sicuramente si potessi godere il suo e allora e in futurum, *e non fussi in potestà di sei Signori perturbare a sua posta la città, e cacciare e ammazzare i cittadini a arbitrio loro, come si era fatto in molti tempi passati, e con questo mezzo farsi Grandi*, si levassi tanta autorità alle sei fave," etc. (Guicciardini, *Storia Fiorentina*, p. 126).

minute and strictly contemporary account of the whole progress of the affair month by month, declares that the difficulty arose in the first instance from the Signory which held office in January and February 1495. The measure of 23rd December had indeed established the Consiglio Grande, but this body had not yet entered upon the full exercise of its powers. The Accoppiatori still had the right of appointing the Signory until the termination of their own lease of office, and the men whom they appointed had no mind to see their own powers curtailed.[1] Their objections to the proposed measure were, however, put forward under the cover of an honourable patriotism, and found considerable support among the members of the aristocratic party which had opposed the establishment of the Consiglio Grande. It was true that under the new *régime* the members of the Signory and the Eight would not always be men of distinguished family; but they would be always the "magnificent" Signory and the "highly respectable" (*spettabili*) Eight. And it was alleged that to allow any appeal from their decision would be to derogate from the honour due to personages who in their representative capacity at least were so exalted.[2] Another motive, however, of a more practical character, seems to have been at work. The Ottimati were even more apprehensive than the popular party of the return of Piero de' Medici, for on

[1] The Gonfaloniere appointed for January and February was one Filippo Corbizi; "il quale era uomo di pochissima qualità," says Guicciardini. But he very explicitly states that the appointments for January, March (Tanai de' Nerli) and May (Bardo Corsi) were made by the Accoppiatori. Landucci, on the other hand (*Diario*, 29th December, p. 94), says that the Signory for January were appointed by the Great Council. "E'l primo Gonfaloniere fu uno de' Corbizi, che non fu sanza dolce allegrezza, parendo un governo popolare e più comune." Guicciardini is, however, more to be trusted than Landucci on a constitutional question. The appointment of Corbizi was probably a concession to popular feeling.

[2] "La nuova Signoria, corrotta già dai primi del reggimento *i quali in nessuno modo deporre la grandigia voleano*, ad allentare circa al procedere bene per il popolo cominciò. Il popolo, di già accostosi di tal omore, rugliava benchè occultamente, e a frate Ieronimo per aiuto ricorreva. Esso, non cessando dallo animare detto popolo al bene comune, publicamente in pergamo a muovere cominciò, che per niente la Signoria per le VI. fave confinare potessi. . . . *Questa cosa nell' alie dava a' grandi, i quali con questo bastone tenere sotto gli uomini disegnavano.* Però forte sparlavano contro a tale provisione, *mostrando che ciò era torre reputazione alla Signoria,*" etc. (Parenti, *Istorie Fiorentine;* Gherardi, p. 112. Gherardi gives *in extenso* the long section of the *Istorie* in which Parenti deals with the whole matter).

them rather than on men of low degree his vengeance, it was feared, would surely fall. Now, to secure his exclusion it was deemed most desirable that the hands of the actual government should by all means be strengthened, and that no opportunity should be allowed for the hatching of plots for his return, or for securing the acquittal of any one who might be found guilty of complicity in such plots. Parenti says that when the project of an amnesty and of the law of appeal was first broached, it was observed that the Bigi (as the Mediceans were called) were greatly rejoiced, and that they were beginning to hold private meetings and to gather strength ("vedendosi i Bigi rallegrare e stare senza timore, anzi insieme ragunarsi e intendersi"), and therefore the proposal was deemed dangerous.[1] The Mediceans, or Palleschi—so called from the palle, or balls (originally pills), which were the device of the Medici, and which are familiar to us all as the sign of a pawnbroker's shop—at this time made a show of being followers of Fra Girolamo, and —having much to expect from him—made common cause with the popular party, the Bianchi or Frateschi. Hence their name of Bigi, or Greys, as politicians of a neutral tint, neither Bianchi nor Neri, neither black nor white. Many shrewd men of the aristocratic faction thought that Fra Girolamo was being hoodwinked by the treacherous friendship of the Bigi, and in after days he himself bitterly reproached them for their ingratitude.[2]

The opposition to the proposed law of appeal was energetically supported by a Franciscan preacher, Fra Domenico da Ponzo. "He was," says Parenti, "a man of considerable learning, but not of holy life, and therefore the 'Grandi' had little difficulty in corrupting him, and in stirring him up against Fra Girolamo; though indeed," he shrewdly adds, "it generally happens that preachers are jealous of one another." One would willingly believe that da Ponzo no less than Savonarola acted in good faith; and it may very well be that, from the strong conviction which he seems to have entertained, and which he certainly expressed, as to Savonarola's delusion in the matter of his prophecies, he was led by the fallacious logic of feeling to look with suspicion upon any proposition emanating from such a

[1] Gherardi, p. 114.

[2] "Si conoscea," says Parenti, "che, sotto ombra di bene, i Bigi per paura si li erano sottomessi, ed a loro cautela esso ciò stringeva." He adds that, in his opinion, the Friar proceeded in all good faith ("a tutto buono cammino andassi"), and advised what he deemed best for the city (Gherardi, *loc. cit.*).

quarter.[1] But with every allowance that can reasonably be made, it seems impossible to excuse the Franciscan's interference in the question of the *sei fave*. In homely English it was no business of his. The Signory might be trusted to look after its own honour and dignity without the help of the preacher at Santa Croce. In fact, the Signory summoned both preachers before them, together with one Fra Tommaso da Rieti, superior ("reggente") of the Dominician convent of Santa Maria Novella. Savonarola was asked to prove that he held a divine commission to preach, presumably on political matters. After listening to the other two for a while Savonarola turned on his heel ("ne', panni ristrettosi si partì"), saying that he knew what he was about, that time would bring the truth to light, and that evil would befall them if they did not follow his advice.[2] It was perhaps the inevitable result of the very decided line which Fra Girolamo had now taken, that as he had made himself at once the mouthpiece and the adviser of one political party, the opposition party should look for a mouthpiece and an adviser of its own, and that Florence should be entertained with the not very edifying spectacle of these two rival preachers maintaining contradictory theses from their respective pulpits.[3] But at least it must be said in Savonarola's favour that, considering the case on its merits, the advantage on the whole probably lay on the side of the proposed measure which was to legalise the appeal from the sentence of the Signory or the Eight.

[1] "Costui (*i.e.* da Ponzo), montato in pergamo, mostrò che profeti più non erano nè essere poteano, e chi per parte di Dio parlava o dicea parlare, dava evidente segno che da quello molto si scostava" (Parenti *apud* Gherardi, p. 113). Whether he was right or wrong in his opinion, da Ponzo can hardly be acquitted of the reproach of officiousness—to use no stronger word—in publicly blaming his rival.

[2] Gherardi, p. 114.

[3] *Cf.* Cosci, pp. 298-99. It is no matter for surprise that Manfredi should have written to d'Este (25th March 1495): "Dubito che sarà necessario a provvedere che uno de epsi lasse el predicare, quando voglino continuare in toccare el facto del Stato et del guberno della città" (Cappelli, n. 48). In fact, before the date of this letter: "fatti advertiti i predicatori come divideano la città, essi prudentemente dalla impresa si tolsono, pregando Iddio che pigliare l'ottimo partito ci lasciassi" (Parenti, *loc. cit.*, p. 117); which was probably the best thing they could have done. But their silence on the subject was of short duration, for on the very next page we read: "I predicatori, benchè detto avessino di ciò piu non volere parlare, nientedimeno instigati credo dalle parti, pure nella materia entravono," etc. Cosci perhaps does not express himself too strongly when he writes (p. 299): "La lotta politico-fratesca cominciò ad errere scandalosa fin dal principio."

"We must modify somewhat [he said] this authority of the *sei fave* by granting an appeal to the Eighty. . . . You say that this is to diminish the authority of the Signory. But I say rather that it is to increase it. Either the Signory wishes to act unjustly (in some particular case), and this it ought not to be empowered to do; or it wishes to execute justice, and in this case it is well that it should have the support of a larger council of good citizens."[1]

As usual the reasoning is a little at fault; but there can be no doubt that a check on possible judicial injustice was needed, and it is at least highly probable that no better venue could have been devised in the case of an appeal than the Council of Eighty.

The Signory of January and February, however, succeeded in staving off the measure, but under the new government appointed for March and April the balance of parties was shifted. Several members of the new Signory were in favour of the measure, and the war with Pisa indirectly helped the cause. The projected law of appeal had been linked with that measure of general amnesty which has been already mentioned, in the hope, perhaps, that the larger measure would float the special ordinance. Now one of the great obstacles which had stood in the way of both was, as has been said, the fear which was entertained of the Mediceans. But now, under stress of the Pisan crisis, it had been necessary, according to the fiscal methods of the time, to levy contributions from wealthy citizens, and among these some of the Palleschi had helped to supply the sinews of war.[2] There was then something of a revulsion in their favour; it was felt that this was no time for criminal prosecution on account of political offences, real or supposed, especially in the case of men who had at least made a show of patriotism. And with this temporary lull of anti-Medicean feeling, the opposition to the law of the *sei fave* likewise grew weaker. Fra Girolamo continued to press the matter, and, notwithstanding the persistent opposition of da Ponzo, the twofold law was passed on 16th, 17th, and 19th March in the Collegio, the Ottanta, and the Consiglio Maggiore respectively.[3] It was passed,

[1] S. 1 on the Psalms (Epiphany, 1495); Villari, i. 293.

[2] Guicciardini (*Storia Fiorentina*, p. 126), Pitti (p. 39), and Nardi (i. 56), all treat them as closely connected.

[3] "Marzo. Entrata la nuova Signoria di uomini di stima e di condizione, sendovene alcuni strettissimi parenti delli esosi al nuovo reggimento, un altra volta l'omori del farsi la pace universale e di levarsi la autorità delle 6 fave risurse. Da una parte la autorità di frate Ieronimo e la presa giusta del farsi pace aveano grande forza; da l' altra parte il pericolo in cui condotti ci aveano per il

indeed, not precisely in the form in which it had been advocated by Savonarola. The right of appeal was established, but the appeal was to lie, not to the Eighty but to the Great Council. Villari will have it that a kind of "infernal" malice and treachery on the part of certain prominent citizens underlay this change. Vespucci, who had before vehemently opposed the proposal, now strongly supported it in the form in which it was laid before the Collegio; and Villari suggests that the real motive of this sudden change of front was the hope that the abuses and disorders which were sure to arise if contested criminal cases were brought before so numerous a body, might hereafter serve to discredit the whole scheme of popular government.[1] For our part, we are disposed to take a different view of the matter. It was unquestionably one of Vespucci's main objects to make the return of Piero impossible. Now, whereas it was conceivable that the Medicean party might, by an adroit manipulation of political wires, secure a majority in the Ottanta, it was perhaps less probable that they would ever be able to gain the favour of the Consiglio Maggiore. Nor has Villari adduced

loro malo governo chi detta pace domandava, stoglievano il popolo a consentirvi. . . . Queste ragioni favore ancora piglievano da' conforti di frate Domenico da Ponzo" (Parenti, *apud* Gherardi, p. 115). Da Ponzo, according to the writer, rivalled Fra Girolamo in predicting a glorious future for Florence, if only no false step were taken. Parenti likewise explains (p. 116), as we have done above, the bearing of the Pisan war on the whole question. The controversy between Savonarola and da Ponzo is mentioned in numerous contemporary documents, *e.g.* Castiglione to Sforza, 24th January (Cappelli, n. 35); Manfredi to d'Este, 25th March ("Se detraheno et mordeno spesso nel loro predicare, secondo che me è riferito"; Cappelli, n. 48); Madonna Guglielmina della Stufa to her husband, 25th May ("Io ve so dire che noi avemo asai che respondere de quelo se dicie à predicato costì el Ponzo. E in soma ne sete biasimato grandemente, d' averlo lasciato predicare: benche io non stimi che gli abia deto tante cose, quante se dicie"; Gherardi, p. 129); as well as by Nardi, Parenti, etc.

[1] Villari (i. 295 *sqq.*) has the advantage of us in having had access to the report of the final debate on the subject, which has not been published. But nothing which he quotes from the speeches delivered on the occasion gives any support to his notion that "un arte ed un astuzia quasi infernale" (p. 296) were at work. No one supposes that party politics at Florence were perfectly straightforward, but it is well to be sparing in the use of superlatives. Lupi, who has published a series of debates touching on the history of Savonarola, but belonging to a later period of his life, very sensibly writes: "Udimmo i nomi faziosi di Piagnoni, di Arrabbiati, di Bigi e di Compagnacci, e gli credemmo nella lor parte tutti d'un istesso valore, di un sentimento ugualmente forte: . . . che poi vi fossero cittadini moderati, imparziali, nemici solo di queste patrie discordie, a nessuno parve cadere in mente" (p. 4).

any kind of proof that the change of venue from the Ottanta to the Consiglio Maggiore was really the work of the Ottimati, and not rather of the popular party. The speech of Luca Corsini, a prominent member of that party, in favour of the bill, was not less emphatic than that of Vespucci.[1] However this may be, Fra Girolamo appears to have raised no objection to the change; and after the measure had once been passed, he always spoke of it as one of the mainstays of the new constitution, and took credit to himself for its introduction. Da Ponzo, on the other hand, found satisfaction in assuring the people that they had been deceived.[2] But here he disappears from the scene.

The next thing which was needful was that the Accoppiatori whose *raison d'être* had lapsed, though the term for which they had been appointed was not yet half expired, should be induced to lay down their office. This, it is easy to understand, they were unwilling to do, for no man is naturally inclined to minimise his own importance. In this case, however, the popular party carried the day. Certain members of the Twenty who were well disposed to Fra Girolamo, set the example of a voluntary resignation, and under the pressure of public opinion the rest followed suit, and the Board ceased to exist on 11th June, 1495.[3]

Finally, in order to secure the stability and permanence of the constitution which we have thus barely outlined, a law was enacted prohibiting for all future time the calling of a Parlamento; for it was felt by the friends of the new constitution that no form of government was secure against the sudden impulses of the mob, who had

[1] See the speeches in Villari, i. 298 *sqq*. Parenti (Gherardi, p. 117) suggests that as the Ottimati saw the time approaching when the Signory would be chosen by a popular election (*i.e.* by the Great Council), they began to see that for their own sakes it would be well to limit the power of a government so appointed. But he says not a word about the change of venue. Savonarola indeed had suggested that the appeal should lie to the Ottanta, but there is nothing to show (so far as we are aware) that this proposal was ever embodied in any *projet de loi* that was actually drawn up.

[2] Parenti, *loc. cit.*, p. 121.

[3] Nardi (i. 66-67) gives as one of the reasons why there was no longer any need of the Accoppiatori, that the fear of Piero de' Medici and of the French king was now at an end ("per essere passato il timore del re e di Piero de' Medici.") And yet their resignation took place only a few days before Fra Girolamo's embassy to Poggibonsi. The real reason for the desire to be rid of them was more probably a sense of their incompetence (*cf.* Guicciardini, *Storia Fiorentina*, p. 131).

so often been betrayed into surrendering their freedom under the flattering pretext that they were exercising it.[1]

Such was the work of the winter of 1494-5, and of the following spring and summer, and among all the men who contributed to its successful completion the foremost place must indisputably be given to Fra Girolamo Savonarola. How unreservedly he regarded it as the direct work of God has been already seen; with what vehemence he expressed himself with reference to those who should oppose it or attempt to overthrow it, will sufficiently appear from passages such as the following. After speaking in general terms against the institution of the Parlamento, or occasional general assembly of the people, as "an instrument of destruction" which must be abolished, he says:—

"Be assured that a Parlamento means nothing less than to take the governing power out of the hands of the people. Keep this in mind, and teach it to your sons. People, so soon as you hear the sound of the bell to call a Parlamento, arise, and unsheath your swords. What is it your wish to do? Cannot this Council (*i.e.* the newly established Consiglio Grande) do everything? What law do you wish to have made? Cannot the Council make it? I would have you make this provision—that as soon as the Signory enter upon their office, they shall take an oath not to call a Parlamento; and if any one should secretly attempt to call one, let him who discloses the attempt, if he be one of the Signory, receive 30,000 ducats; if another person, 1,000. And if he who makes the attempt be one of the Signory, *let him lose his head;* if another person, *let him be declared a rebel, and let all his goods be confiscated.* And let all the Gonfalonieri (*i.e.* the captains of the civic guard) on entering upon their office take an oath, that so soon as they hear the sound of the bell calling a Parlamento, *they shall forthwith hasten to sack the houses of the Signory*, and let the Gonfalonieri who shall sack one of the houses receive one-fourth of the property found therein. . . . Further, if the Signory are going to call a Parlamento, the moment they set foot on the Ringhiera let them no longer be considered as holding office; *and any one cutting them in pieces shall not be guilty of sin.*"[2]

"This," says Villari, "was a momentary extravagance of language." But Luotto very frankly admits that passages comparable with the above recur again and again in the sermons preached by Savonarola in 1496.[3]

[1] Villari, i. 306. The abuses of the appeal to the Parlamento have been well set forth by Mrs Oliphant, *Makers of Florence*, p. 290.

[2] S. 26 on the Psalms (Villari, i. 307-8).

[3] Villari, *loc. cit.*; Luotto, p. 368.

The discourse from which we have quoted was delivered on 28th July, 1495. On 13th August, the law abolishing for ever the appeal to a Parlamento was passed. Conspiracy for the purpose of calling one of these assemblies was to be punished with death, "and a reward of 300 florins shall be given to him who shall reveal such a conspiracy."[1]

On 11th October of the same year, in view of a threatened attempt by Piero de' Medici to effect by force an entrance into the city—

"Holding up the crucifix, he openly, and with a loud voice, advised that any one who should propose the restoration of a despotism in Florence should be put to death; and that whoever would bring back the Medici should be dealt with as the Romans dealt with those who desired to bring back Tarquinius. 'Wilt thou,' he said, 'who are not willing to pay respect to Christ, have respect for private citizens? Execute justice, I say to you. Off with his head!—Be he the chief of any family whatever, off with his head! . . . . Place confidence nowhere but in the Consiglio Maggiore, which is the work of God and not of man; and whosoever would change it, whosoever would place the government in the hands of a few, may he be eternally accursed by the Lord.'"[2]

Four days later the Friar's words bore fruit in a *Provisione* whereby it was declared that "Piero de' Medici having . . . made many attempts against the liberty of Florence, and having been declared a rebel . . . may be put to death by any one with impunity," and a price of 4000 gold florins was put upon his head.[3] This last measure, we may add, was regarded as unwise even by some of those who did not desire Piero's return.[4]

[1] Villari, i. 309.

[2] Villari, i. 387-8.

[3] Villari, i. 388-9.

[4] Guicciardini, *Del Reggimento di Firenze*, p. 216. This treatise, to which we shall frequently have occasion to refer, is cast in the form of a dialogue, in which the principal speaker is Bernardo del Nero, the other interlocutors being Pagolantonio Soderini, Piero Capponi, and Piero Guicciardini, the author's father. The dialogue, though fictitious, is founded upon a conversation actually held by these distinguished men at Bernardo's villa in the winter of 1494-95. It is extremely valuable, not merely as showing what were the views held by experienced politicians concerning the constitutional changes then in progress, but also as illustrating the possibility of friendly discussion on the burning questions of the hour among men of very opposite opinions. This friendly feeling was not likely to be promoted by the kind of language which Fra Girolamo, occasionally at least, allowed himself to use. Guicciardini himself, it should be added, was a firm supporter of the Consiglio Grande.

It would perhaps not be rash to say that the Friar's words also bore fruit in an unforeseen way when the veteran statesman, Bernardo del Nero, with four companions, Lorenzo Tornabuoni, Niccolò Ridolfi, Gianozzo Pucci, and Giovanni Cambi, suffered death on 22nd August 1497, for complicity in a plot for the restoration of Piero. The tragedy is at least so closely connected with the political line taken by Savonarola, that we may be pardoned for anticipating the course of events by relating it here. Bernardo was pronounced guilty in so far that, having been *Gonfaloniere di Giustizia* at the time, he had not revealed the plot to the Signory. The others were condemned as active participants. This was an occasion on which the law authorising an appeal from the *sei fave*, or sentence of the Otto, to the Consiglio Grande might perhaps have been expected to take effect.[1] There were, it is true, special circumstances which, in the opinion of many, invalidated the right of appeal in this particular case; for the proceedings had been by way of impeachment before a special council of some 130 officials convened *ad hoc*, and not simply by way of a trial before the Otto. The larger council having passed a resolution declaring the conspirators worthy of death, the Eight, by a majority of six to two, voted that the resolution should take effect. Then arose the question of allowing the appeal, which was referred to the Signory. Four were in favour of the appeal, five against it. This being so, the appeal would probably have been allowed, but for the violent interposition of Francesco Valori, who happened to be the principal political supporter of Fra Girolamo. Seizing the ballot-box, and advancing to the bench of the Signory, he fairly frightened the Provost into putting the question "that justice be at once executed." Moreover, by his violent conduct and language—only too faithful an echo of the words of the preacher — he succeeded in securing a unanimous vote where at the previous scrutiny there had been a majority of only one.[2] Savonarola has been severely blamed for

[1] It had taken effect on occasion of the conviction of Filippo Corbizi and others for participation in a political plot in April 1496. The appeal was allowed, but did not avail to obtain a reversal of the sentence (Guicciardini, *Storia Fiorentina*, p. 142; Landucci, *Diario*, 27th and 28th April, 8th May, pp. 130-32).

[2] The whole proceedings are set forth at considerable length, and the final scene graphically described, by Pitti, *Istoria Fiorentina*, pp. 43-49. Speaking of Valori he says: "Itone a piè (della pancata d. Signoria) battè forte sul desco col bossolo de' partiti": and then, after reciting his violent harangue (which is given by Villari, ii. 55-6) he adds: "Quasi furibondo distese il braccio con il

not having interposed, during the period over which these proceedings extended, in order to secure for the conspirators the exercise of a right which he himself had helped to establish. The reproach is strongly urged against him by the author of *Romola*.[1] Villari, on the other hand, and the gifted authoress of *The Makers of Florence*, entirely exonerate him.[2] It may at least be said that he was under no obligation to interpose on behalf of men whom he regarded as dangerous traitors. A more far-seeing sagacity, however, to say nothing of a more large-hearted charity, might perhaps have suggested that a greater danger to the public welfare lay in the gratification of the thirst for political vengeance. Within a year both Francesco Valori and Savonarola himself were to fall victims to the violence of Florentine party spirit. A few months later, says Guicciardini, every one regretted the death of the five conspirators. "But this regret cannot," he adds, "restore them to life."[3] The condemnation of Bernardo and his companions, for the time at least, alienated from the Friar several of the leading citizens of Florence; among them, Pagolantonio Soderini, Gianbattista Ridolfi, and Piero Guicciardini.[4]

These particular incidents, however, lie somewhat aside from the question which now claims consideration, viz. what is to be thought of the very active part which Fra Girolamo took in initiating the new constitution of Florence?

bossolo in mano, invitando il Martini (the provost) alla risoluzione." The resolution having been put: "La pronta proposta del Martini, e la presenza feroce del Valori, sbigottì di maniera li quattro Signori aversi che renderono nella sua mano favorevole partito; e fattone il bulletino agli Otto, ne fu subito da loro la deliberazione eseguita" (p. 49). The five condemned men were executed at dead of night.

[1] *Romola*, ch. lix.

[2] Villari, ii. 58 *sqq.* Oliphant, *Makers of Florence*, p. 312 *sqq.*

[3] *Storia*, p. 164.

[4] Pitti, p. 50. "Restò Francesco Valori . . . celebrato dal popolo come un nuovo Catone . . . con odio grandissimo degl' interessi co' morti, e con invidia non poca de' principali della sua medesima setta. Fra i quali Pagolantonio Soderini, per gratificarsi ai Palleschi; Giovambattista Ridolfi, per la morte del suo fratello; Piero Guicciardini, per l'affronto ricevuto da lui, si accostarono (per tirarlo addietro) agli avversarii del Frate." Such was the judgment of later days. At the time, the Signory wrote of the affair to Bracci (31st August, 1497; Villari, ii. Append. p. xlix) as of one: "Di che speriamo la nostra Republica havere imortale obligatione a Dio; per havere passato questo pericolo imminente alla libertà, per la avaritia, ambitione, et perfidia di questi homini scelesti et dolorosi (*i.e.* 'toisti') cittadini." But they would naturally use strong language in seeking to justify their action at Rome.

We have no wish whatever to express disapproval of his action in the matter, simply because it does not perchance seem to fit in with post-Tridentine notions of ecclesiastical propriety. But judging his conduct in the light of principles fully recognised in his own time, and also in the light of subsequent events, it does seem to us that, in the proceedings which we have briefly summarised, he went too fast and too far. A great opportunity had no doubt arisen. The welfare of the republic depended in great measure upon his action. The State was in need of help, and that help it was in his power, more than in that of any other man, to give. There was no lack of general principles on which it was important to insist, and on some if not on all of which Fra Girolamo did insist at this crisis. For instance, that the law of Christ should be the basis of all government in a Christian people (as against the cynical dictum of Cosimo de' Medici that a State cannot be governed by paternosters); that political duties cannot be dissociated from moral obligations, and that the giving of a vote for or against a measure is a matter not merely of expediency, but of conscience; that it is sometimes a duty to come to a prompt decision even when the grounds for such a decision are, in the nature of things, only probable, and that this duty now lay upon those who were responsible for the welfare of the republic; that in weighing the grounds for such a conclusion the end to be obtained, viz. the general welfare, ought alone to be steadily kept in view to the exclusion of all side issues; that in weighing the advice given by rival politicians, account should be taken of their motives, so far as their motives might be gauged by a review of their past career; that the example of neighbouring States, whose circumstances resembled their own, might well weigh more than abstract political theories; and last, but not least, that when a decision should be reached it would be the duty of the disappointed minority to submit to the accomplished fact, and loyally to abstain from all underhand efforts to upset a constitution which would deserve, as it would require, much patient forbearance until it had become consolidated by time.[1]

It need hardly be said that principles like these are capable of indefinite expansion and illustration at the hands of an orator gifted as Savonarola was. To have given advice of this kind would have been entirely in keeping with the preacher's religious profession;

[1] The need of such patient forbearance is more than once referred to, or implied, in Guicciardini, *Del Reg.*, *e.g.* pp. 100, 119, 124.

and to have developed with all his wonderful eloquence, and driven home with all his fiery energy, the fundamental truths of political morality, would have been to confer a real boon upon his fellow-citizens. To have done this, as he was so well fitted to do it, would have been to exercise the functions of the true educator, whose aim is to teach his pupils to work and think for themselves, rather than to attempt to smooth the path to learning by doing their work for them. Nor, again, considering the circumstances of the time, could we have blamed Fra Girolamo if—being invited by the Signory—he had expounded before them, like any other speaker, his own individual views as to the decision which ought to be taken. His preference for the Consiglio Grande was well worthy to carry weight in the discussion; and when the Council had been once established, secret plots and machinations, having its downfall for their end, deserved all the reprobation which disloyalty to any other form of duly established government would rightly have called forth.

But it was one thing to insist, as any Christian preacher might on occasion find it his duty to insist, on general principles of political morality, or again, under exceptional circumstances, to tender his advice on questions of constitutional politics; but it was quite another thing to invest his own personal opinions in a manner with the authority of the Gospel, and to say in God's name what God had perchance given him no commission to say. Assuming the *bonâ fides* of Fra Girolamo, it will be understood that we do not intend to impute moral blame in connection with every single logical or practical result from what we believe to have been an initial error; but having in view only the objective truth of the matter, we may safely say that it is always a mistake—and it may be a very mischievous mistake—to pretend to certainty where probability alone is available as the guide of life and action, or to claim a directly divine sanction for that which is divine only in the sense in which the natural outcome of human prudence and sagacity is a God-given boon. We have no animus whatsoever against the Consiglio Grande "after the manner of the Venetians." It is quite possible, nay, highly probable, that under the circumstances no better basis of government could have been devised by or for the Florentine Republic. But in endeavouring to form a judgment on the matter, two points must be steadily kept in mind. First, that as a matter of simple fact, this copying of the Venetian polity was like the enacting of Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark; and secondly, that as a matter of

opinion, many shrewd contemporary politicians regarded the omission as fatal. Venice had its Doge elected for life. To make the resemblance perfect, Florence should have had its *Gonfaloniere a vita*, or at the very least it should have elected a President of some kind whose tenure of office could be reckoned by years and not by months.[1] And in fact after the new constitution—formed under the influence of Fra Girolamo—had been on its trial for eight years, the need of such a provision made itself so keenly felt that in 1502 Piero Soderini, nephew of Pagolantonio, was chosen perpetual *Gonfaloniere*.[2] We are not saying that this ought to have been done sooner. We can easily understand that in 1594 the special circumstances of the time may have made any such provision practically impossible.[3] In the days which followed Piero's expulsion it is probable that not even the eloquence of a Savonarola—had he cared to devote it to such a cause—could have induced the people of Florence to elect or accept one of the Medici, under altered conditions, as the constitutional head of the State; nor would Piero, it may be surmised, have been contented to accept or to hold such a position under the needful restrictions.[4] On the other hand there was, perhaps, no one else whose known capabilities or services to the State—not to speak of other qualifications—would have made him an acceptable candidate for a lengthened term of presidency.[5] And for these reasons among others it may well be that no better scheme of government could have been devised than that of the Consiglio Grande and of the Ottanta, with a rapid succession of Gonfalonieri as figure-heads of the republic.

At the same time it must be remembered that there were politicians of high character who regarded Piero's expulsion as

[1] Guicciardini, *Del Reg.*, p. 136; *Storia*, cap. xxv.; *Discorso* III., pp. 272-273. Of the Venetian Republic he says that: "E stato grandissimo fondamento lo avere uno Duce perpetuo, e se ne vedde ancora lo esempio per contrario in noi, otto anni (1494-1502) dopo lo essere fondato il vivere populare; dove il non essere chi tenessi cura del governo particularmente ci condusse in tanto precipizio che la salute nostra nacque molte volte piu tosto da Dio o dal caso che dalli uomini o dal sapere."

[2] Guicciardini, *Storia*, *loc. cit.*

[3] Guicciardini, *Del Reg.*, p. 183.

[4] Nardi, when relating the debates which preceded the restoration of the Medici in 1512, shrewdly remarks that it was well understood that the proposed guarantee against molestation, which was to be granted in their favour, practically amounted to a guarantee that they should be allowed to molest others (ii. 3 *sqq*).

[5] Guicciardini, *Del Reg.*, pp. 30, 157.

nothing short of a civic calamity.[1] Convinced that the first condition of Florentine prosperity was security from her external foes; that continuity and resolute vigour in her foreign policy were the best guarantees of such security; that this continuity and vigour could only be hoped for under the guiding hand of a single man; and, finally, that the only form of one-man government which was possible for Florence was that rule of the Medici on which the experience of sixty years had set its seal—they held that, notwithstanding all his faults, it would have been wiser, to say the least, not to banish Piero from Florence.[2] The moral influence of Lorenzo and of Piero had, probably, been as bad as that of Charles II. or George IV. was afterwards to be in England.[3] But such evils must sometimes be tolerated for the sake of avoiding others which may prove greater in the long run. The real motive for the expulsion of Piero was not, after all, the desire of a moral reform. And it is at least possible that if the fiasco of the fortresses had been made the occasion, not for expelling him, but for safeguarding the State against an arbitrary and despotic exercise of his power, the ultimate results of such measures might have been better for all parties than the outcome of Fra Girolamo's political reform. At home, taught by experience, and his power limited by constitutional checks, Piero might yet have proved a capable ruler.[4] In exile, he was sure to prove a dangerous enemy, and still greater, perchance, would be the danger to be apprehended after his death from some more able and determined member of the family.[5] The "plague of powerful exiles (*potenti fuorusciti*)," as Bernardo calls it in Guicciardini's dialogue, of men whose very existence was a standing menace to the State, was an evil of which it was not easy to exaggerate the magnitude.[6]

It was, of course, possible to believe all this, and yet—while regretting Piero's expulsion—to hold that he ought not to be allowed

[1] Guicciardini, *Del Reg.*, p. 107.

[2] Guicciardini, *ibid.*, pp. 96, 81, 157.

[3] "The corrupting despotism of the Medici had exercised the worst possible influence on the religious and moral life of the people" (Schnitzer, p. 557).

[4] Guicciardini, *Del Reg.*, p. 102. Pitti (p. 28) very plainly says that long before the affair of the fortresses Piero's enemies had determined on his ruin, and this from no genuinely patriotic motive. "Conciossiache i più riputati dello stato procuravano la rovina di Piero, *non per zelo di ricuperare la libertà*, ma per non avere nella tirannide la parte consueta, come s'erano sempre promessi."

[5] Guicciardini, *Del Reg.*, p. 215.

[6] Guicciardini, *ibid.*, pp. 95, 209.

to return. It was possible to be fully alive to the mischievous confusion of ideas which cloaked over with the honoured name of liberty the vulgar ambition of a crowd of incompetent men to have a hand in the administration of the State, and yet to hold that, under existing circumstances, the balance of advantage lay in accepting the accomplished fact. Such was the view of those moderate politicians whose opinions are so fully set forth by Guicciardini in the dialogue *Del Reggimento di Firenze*, under the name of Bernardo del Nero. Again and again Bernardo reminds his guests that the true notion of liberty is equality under the laws, not an equal participation in the making or administration of the laws; that it is the latter which men (in Florence particularly) commonly seek under the name of liberty; and that this ambition is mischievous, and must be kept in check.[1] He concludes, however, by giving advice as to how to make the best of a state of things which he deeply deplores. Asked whether he desires the return of Piero, he answers, in effect: No, I wish that he had not been banished, but now that he has been banished, I do not wish for his return, for this would almost certainly lead to regrettable acts of political vengeance on his part.[2] But it was not every honest Florentine who would draw this distinction, or who would feel himself in duty bound to stop short precisely at this point of political moderation. Who could seriously blame a man for thinking that as Piero's expulsion had been a blunder, his restoration would—all things considered—be the best thing for Florence; and that, in all probability, this restoration would somehow come about if only "questo benedetto Frate" (as Tranchedino calls him) would leave politics alone?[3] And it is at least an open question whether Piero's return in 1495 or 1496 might not have saved the republic from the more thorough-going despotism which followed the final re-establishment of the Medici in 1512.

Nor is there any reason, so far as we are aware, to doubt that Piero Capponi and some at least of his friends were equally honest in their misgivings as to the wisdom of the popular government established through the influence of the Friar;[4] equally honest in their conviction that the republic had never known better days than

[1] Guicciardini, *Del Reg.*, pp. 26, 50 *sqq.*; 56 *sqq.*, 63, 105, 135.

[2] Guicciardini, *ibid.*, p. 107.

[3] Pitti (p. 42) bears witness that many of the common people secretly desired the return of Piero. Can we be sure that all these did so from selfish or dishonest motives?

[4] Guicciardini, *Del Reg.*, pp. 50, 66, 133.

under the rule of the Ottimati in pre-Medicean times;[1] and equally honest in their desire to bring about a change which they deemed essential to the welfare of the State. "The Arrabbiati," writes Cosci, "loved their country and freedom no less than did the Frateschi, and perhaps they understood, better than these latter, what was for her honour and advantage."[2]

Both parties, however—that of the Arrabbiati, as the advocates of an aristocratic government were nicknamed, and that of the Mediceans, or Palleschi—were outvoted in the debates, or *Pratiche*, of 1494-95.[3] Or, to speak more correctly, the former, represented by Vespucci, Capponi, Nerli, and others, were outvoted, and the latter had not sufficient influence among the people, or with the Collegio, to allow of their views being made the subject of a vote. And perhaps it was better so. In the balance of advantages and disadvantages, with every allowance for the distinguished services rendered to the State by Cosimo and Lorenzo de' Medici, it may very reasonably be held that the Medicean scale fairly kicked the beam. But it is one thing to be outvoted, or cast in a political contest; it is quite another thing to be prospectively branded as a traitor, and to hear one's opinions characterised as those of an enemy of God and man. Savonarola, indeed, disclaimed all concern with party politics. He declared that his only wish was to see all parties united in a kingdom which had Christ alone for its head.[4] But this union, as he conceived it, was union in agreement with his own political views.[5] In his invectives against the Palleschi, and against those advocates of the *governo stretto* whom he did not hesitate to

[1] Guicciardini, *Del Reg.*, pp. 27, 31.

[2] Cosci, p. 449.

[3] During these discussions, and for some time afterwards, the Palleschi, within the walls of the city, played a waiting game. Partly, perhaps, out of gratitude for the amnesty, but principally from politic motives they attached themselves for the present to the professed adherents of the Friar (Pitti, p. 38). They thus gained for themselves, as has been said, the sobriquet of *Bigi*, "the Greys." It was no doubt a bitter disappointment to Savonarola when he found that many of those who had benefited by his exhortations, and had in appearance given him their support, were after all hostile to his reforms (*cf.* Luotto, pp. 364-65).

[4] "Cristo è vestro Rè, e voi siate suoi ministri . . . nessuno si chiami più *bianchi* o *bigi;* ma tutti insieme uniti siano una medesima cosa" (S. 23 on the Psalms; Luotto, pp. 356-57).

[5] *Fate questo che io ho detto . . . e statevi sopra della conscienza mia* che sara ben fatto. . . . Questo io ve le dico con grande fondamento, *e cosi inspirato da Dio*, fate queste bone leggi, e non avrete nemici alcuni" (*ibid.*).

speak of as "questi Arrabbiati," Savonarola appears to us to have put himself in the wrong, and to have injured a good cause by over-vehement advocacy. The exasperation caused, or at least fomented by his discourses, could hardly fail to drive his opponents to extremities.[1] No one, of course, would wish to justify the violence of the Friar's enemies, or to deny that the motives of many of his opponents, whether Palleschi or Arrabbiati, were of the most unworthy and even criminal character. But any one who will be at the pains to study the works of Guicciardini and Pitti can hardly fail to be convinced, as it seems to us, that the motives of many of Fra Girolamo's supporters were, in many cases, only less unworthy; and likewise that it was very possible to be conscientiously persuaded of the unwisdom of the constitutional reform advocated and carried through by the Friar.

Moreover, it must be remembered that, in the years of Savonarola's political activity, domestic politics could not be altogether dissociated from the burning question of the League. A strong party in Florence was in favour of the coalition; and it was the triumph of the popular party under the guidance of Fra Girolamo which made it possible for the city to be held firm to her alliance with France.[2] And thus it was that Savonarola's activity as a constitutional reformer indirectly helped to bring him into conflict with the Pope. This was a result which could not have been foreseen from the outset; but it was also a result which might have been avoided had his partisanship from the outset been less pronounced.

To sum up. So far from unconditionally condemning Savonarola for interfering in political matters, we believe him to have rendered a signal service to Florence in three particulars; first, by protecting her from the hostility of Charles VIII., which might have been so easily aroused, and thereby from the still greater evils arising out of

[1] "Piagnoni e Arrabbiati non sarebbero mai stati in Firenze se il Savonarola non si fosse mosso da Ferrara" (Cosci, p. 461). Lupi, speaking of the debates relative to Savonarola held in 1497 and 1498, which he has published, says truly that they clearly exhibit "il progresso delle passioni, come cioè di giorno in giorno riscaldandosi le parti, era da ciascuno sottomessa la ragione al talento, come dai dignitosi e moderati contrasti delle prime Pratiche si scendesse poi anche ne' Consigli a quel parlare intollerante solamente usato fin quì dai cittadini nel segreto de' loro ritrovi e delle loro famiglie" (pp. 4, 5). The reader will have abundant opportunity of judging how far Fra Girolamo himself may or may not have given occasion to "quel parlare intollerante" of which Lupi here speaks.

[2] Hence the support given by Sforza to the enemies of the popular government (Pitti, p. 38; Cosci, pp. 298, 449).

the reprisals which his hostility would certainly have provoked; secondly, by preaching peace at a moment which the violence of party feeling made to be one of supreme danger to the commonweal; thirdly, by helping to the establishment of a constitution, which if not ideally perfect, was at least in accordance with the political sentiments of the great majority of his fellow-citizens. But we hold that his services would have been far greater had they been dissociated from the factitious support of what we cannot but regard as his self-deluding claim to be regarded as having been divinely commissioned to carry on the work of political reform. It is easy to say that the presence and the activity of Savonarola was indispensable to the welfare of Florence. Florence would have enjoyed his presence and benefited by his activity for a much longer period, had he not, in his misguided enthusiasm, over-reached those high and noble designs which, as every one now admits, he had ever in view.

Before passing on to the events which will engage our attention in the next chapter, a word must be said about a correspondence which in the meanwhile had been carried on concerning Savonarola, and in which he had himself borne a part. In December 1494 he had received orders to preach the following Lent at Lucca, a command which was, as it seems, enforced by a Papal Brief.[1] Nardi and others, followed by Villari, are of opinion that this order was due to the secret machination of the Friar's enemies. But as Guasti and Cosci have suggested, no evidence is forthcoming to show that this was really the case, and in view of the documents brought to light by Guasti it seems to us extremely improbable.[2] Two years previously Fra Girolamo had preached at Bologna, and nothing was more natural than that the authorities at Lucca should now desire his services, or that Torriano, the General of the Dominicans, should comply with their request. That the authority of the Pope should be involved was quite in accordance with the usage of the time, as appears from what followed. That Savonarola should, under the circumstances, have been loth to go, yet resolved to obey (as Villari has shown from the sermons delivered by him on 20th and 25th January 1495), is also quite in accordance with what might

[1] Nardi (i. 52-53) is, so far as we are aware, the only authority for the existence of this Brief, and it is quite possible that he may have been mistaken.

[2] Nardi, *loc. cit.*; Villari, i. 353; Guasti, pp. 122 *sqq.*; Cosci, pp. 299 *sqq.*

have been expected.[1] But the people of Florence had no mind to lose him, even for the moment, and Nardi testifies, and to this at least he is a competent witness, that the expression of popular feeling was very emphatic.[2] On 28th December the Signory wrote to Alexander VI. to obtain from him a precept that Fra Girolamo should remain at Florence, and this letter was followed by another from the Ten praying the Pope to command him to preach the Lent there. In a covering letter to the Florentine ambassador in Rome they beg him to use every effort to obtain from the Pope a Brief to this effect.[3] The Brief, or at least a revocation of the command to preach at Lucca, was obtained; Savonarola sent his faithful disciple, Fra Domenico da Pescia, to preach there in his stead, and a letter of cordial thanks from the Anziani of Lucca, for the services of Domenico, is still extant.[4] The Anziani, however, did not abandon the hope of securing Savonarola as the lenten preacher for the year 1496, and on 14th March they wrote to him to express their desire.[5] He replied, thanking them for the invitation, adding moreover that he recognised in their wish an indication of God's will in the matter, and that he would certainly comply with it unless—as he greatly feared—some fresh hindrance should arise to prevent him.[6] Long before the Lent came round Fra Girolamo—as will appear in the

[1] It can hardly be said, however, that he expressed with a very good grace his readiness to obey. "Io debbo andare a Lucca, e di la forse altrove, secondo gli ordini. . . . Io parto, perchè debbo obbedire agli ordini, e non voglio generare scandalo nella vostra città" (S. 7 on the Psalms, Villari, i. 354).

[2] Della qual cosa per la maggior parte degli uomini si prese grande alterazione, perciò che . . . si giudicava che le sue prediche fussero molto utili alla correzione de' costumi, e necessarie a pacificare insieme gli animi discordanti, etc." (Nardi, i. 53).

[3] The first and last of these letters have been published by Guasti (p. 123) and Meier (*cf.* Villari, p. 354), but the letter of the Ten to the Pope has not been brought to light. Corbizi, who was Gonfaloniere in January, was no friend to Fra Girolamo; but this was not the only occasion—as will hereafter appear—on which the Ten were more solicitous on his behalf than the Signory, under various governments (*cf.* Nardi, *loc. cit.*; Villari, p. 355). Villari's remarks (p. 356) about the readiness shown by Alexander VI. to revoke one Brief by another are quite uncalled for. Such revocations are necessarily common. A favour is asked, and granted. Circumstances subsequently arise which make it desirable to recall what has been conceded. A very simple matter.

[4] The Anziani to Timotheo Balbano, 21st March, 1495 (Guasti, p. 124).

[5] The letter is given by Guasti, p. 125.

[6] "Quare ni nova et impedimenta et casus emergant, quae ex temporis varietate ac longinquitate facillime possent accidere; iam ego, quantum in me est, V. D. polliceor, satis me esse facturum et venturum," etc.(Guasti, *loc. cit.*),

next chapter—had been inhibited from preaching; and the extant correspondence on the subject closes with two letters from the Anziani to Felino Sandeo and Giovanni Giglio at Rome, praying them to take measures that notwithstanding this prohibition they may not be disappointed.[1] What the reply to these letters may have been we do not know, but Fra Girolamo did not preach the Lent at Lucca.

It is curious that when the Lucchesi were making their first efforts to secure Savonarola for their lenten preacher, similar efforts were being made by Lodovico Sforza to induce da Ponzo to preach during the same season at Milan. Castiglioni, however, his envoy at Florence, writes to Sforza that da Ponzo does not wish to go, being unwilling that the Florentine Republic should be deprived of his assistance in these first days of her reformed constitution.[2]

Possibly it might have been better for Fra Girolamo and da Ponzo alike if both of them had absented themselves from Florence at the time when the factions of the Arrabbiati, the Palleschi, and the Frateschi were in process of formation. Or rather, if they had thus absented themselves, it may be that the bitter dissensions which subsequently divided these factions would never have arisen, or would at least have been less acute.

[1] Guasti, pp. 125-26.

[2] Da Ponzo declined, "allegando due respecti; l'uno per recuperare la fama et honore suo per la detentione che li fu facta ad Sarenzana alli dì parsati; l'altro per non manchare ad questa Republica nel principio de questa sua reformatione" (Castiglioni to Sforza, 24th January 1495; Cappelli, n. 35).

CHAPTER X

PROPHET AND POPE (1)

WE have now reached that point in our review of the career of Savonarola at which it becomes necessary to consider his relations with the Pope, Alexander VI. The subject is obviously one of considerable difficulty, and it is above all important that whatever verdict is finally arrived at should be based upon an adequate acquaintance with the whole of the series of letters which passed between the Pope and the Friar, and not upon selected extracts from one or another of these documents. The letters in question are not in their entirety accessible to the ordinary English reader; and it will therefore not be superfluous to give a tolerably full summary of each.

The series opens with a Brief of Alexander VI., dated 21st July 1495:—

The Pope has heard many reports of the apostolic labours of Fra Girolamo, whereat he greatly rejoices. And he has further learned, within the last few days, from Savonarola himself, that the object of his preaching is to promote to the utmost the service of God. But he has also recently been informed that in his sermons the Friar has declared that his predictions of future events come not from himself nor from human wisdom, but "by a divine revelation." This being so, the Pope continues: "We are desirous, in accordance with our pastoral duty, to have some conversation with you, and to hear from your own lips what it has pleased God to make known to you, that we may pursue a better course. We therefore exhort and command you that, in all holy obedience, you come to us without delay; and we shall receive you with paternal love and charity."

So, except for the date and subscription, ends the letter.[1] It is, of course, easy to speak of the "honied words" of the Pope, and to suggest that the invitation somewhat resembled that of the spider to the fly. But having regard to the subsequent action of the Pope,

[1] Villari, i. 393; Append. p. civ.; Luotto, p. 446.

at least down to 1498, we see no reason whatever to suppose that the Friar had anything worse to fear from him than that he would have been prohibited from continuing to set forth his prophetic mission, and from publicly opposing the papal policy in regard of the League. That he would, further, have been removed from Florence is likely enough; but there were other cities in Italy which might have profited by his moral and dogmatic teaching, and in which he might himself have learned the lesson that Florence is not, after all, the centre of all the world, and that the people of Florence had no claim whatsoever to be regarded as a specially chosen nation.

Savonarola, however, replied (31st July) by reminding the Pope of a well-known passage in the Decretals, in which Alexander III. had called upon the then Archbishop of Ravenna "either reverently [to] fulfil our demand or give a reasonable excuse why you cannot fulfil it." And he proceeds to give his own reasonable excuse:—

He has long desired to visit Rome, and to venerate the tombs of the Apostles; and this desire is increased by his Holiness' gracious command. "But many obstacles stand in the way," by which he is detained by necessity against his will, and is unable to obey commands the authority of which he most willingly and reverently acknowledges. "Bodily infirmity is the first obstacle, caused by fever and dysentery . . . [and by] a constant agitation in body and mind, brought on by exertions for the welfare of this State . . . so much so that I am advised by my physicians to give over preaching and study; for they and others are agreed that unless I submit to proper remedies, I run the risk of an early death."

We may observe, in passing, that only three days before the date of this letter, and presumably not before the receipt of the Papal Brief, Savonarola had preached that exceedingly vehement discourse against the Parlamento which has been already quoted. He did so, however, as he told his hearers, against the advice of his physicians, and for some time subsequently he abstained from preaching.[1]

Moreover [he continues], whereas he has saved the city from much bloodshed, and from many other evils, and has established her in peace under holy laws ("ridottala a concordia e sante leggi") many wicked men, who thirst for human blood and would fain reduce the city to servitude, and who find their plans frustrated, have turned their enmity against himself. Nay, they have more than once attempted his

[1] Luotto, pp. 450-51.

life by violence and by poison; and he cannot safely set foot outside the house without a strong escort. Furthermore, the new reform of the city has not yet taken deep root, and is in need of continual support, lest it be brought to ruin by the evil designs of its enemies. Wherefore, it is the judgment of "all good and wise citizens that my departure from hence would be to the very great detriment of this people, while it would be of little advantage *costì*"—*i.e* at Rome. He trusts that his Holiness will tolerate a brief delay, until the work which has been begun shall have been brought to its completion; and he has no doubt that for the good of the city God has willed that the aforesaid obstacles should stand in the way of his journey. In a word, it is God's will that he should not leave Florence at present.[1] But he hopes that it may soon be possible to go to Rome, in accordance with the desires of his Holiness. Meanwhile, since the Pope has expressed the desire to be more fully informed concerning his predictions regarding the calamities of Italy and the renovation of the Church, he may learn all that is to be known about the matter ("potra saperle pienamente") from a little book which he is printing, and of which he will send a copy as soon as it is ready. More than is contained in this book (the *Compendium Revelationum*) he is not at liberty to utter, for he has set down in it only those things which he has been commanded to make known. As to those things which have been confided to him under secrecy ("quelle che devono restare nell' arca") he is not at liberty to reveal them to any mortal. The other things he has committed to writing in order that, if they do not come to pass, all the world may know that he is a false prophet; and that if they do come to pass as they have been foretold, thanks may be given to God, who has shown Himself so earnestly desirous of our salvation. In conclusion, he once more requests that his Holiness will deign to accept his excuses, founded as they are on true and manifest reasons; and that he will not lay upon his shoulders a burden beyond his strength. As soon as ever it shall be possible he will be eager to fulfil the wishes of his Holiness, to whom he humbly commends himself.

Now it must be admitted, we think, that two at least of the reasons alleged by Savonarola for delaying (not refusing) to comply with the Pope's commands were in themselves true and sufficient. There can be no question as to his ill health, to which he frequently alludes in the sermons preached shortly before this time; and the dangers which a journey to Rome would have entailed upon him were no less real. The road was beset with the emissaries of "the Moor" Sforza; and in the holy city itself the agents of Piero de

[1] "Per vantaggio della quale (opera), *io ne sono certo*, fu volere divino che nascessero questi impedimenti al mio partire. Imperocche *non è voluntà di Dio che al presente mi parta di qui*." The letter is given by Villari, i. Append. p. cv., and by Luotto, pp. 447-49.

Medici were powerful and reckless enough to be capable of any crime.[1] The third reason, viz. the importance of his remaining at Florence for the good of the city, is one which is, to say the least, of more doubtful validity; but we see no reason to doubt that it was put forth by Fra Girolamo in all good faith.

It is possible indeed that a man of heroic sanctity would have contrived to overcome the obstacles alleged in Savonarola's letter; and that such a man would have faced all dangers, and taken all risks, rather than interpose any delay in complying with the Pope's commands. But no man is bound to be a saint, and heroic virtue lies outside the obligations of canonical obedience. We set aside as unworthy of serious consideration the hypothesis that both letters are nothing better than monuments of Italian finesse, and that neither party disclosed the motives which really actuated them. Alexander VI. was capable no doubt of almost any baseness when the motive was sufficiently powerful. But he was not entirely dead to all sense of duty where his own lower passions were not directly engaged. At the moment he was engaged in the design, objectively patriotic and apparently wise, of liberating Italy from the disastrous presence of a foreign invader; and when he found his efforts frustrated by one who claimed a divine authority for his opposition, the very least he could do was to enquire into the truth of the alleged divine authority. The Brief which we have summarised above was such as S. Pius V. himself might have written, and probably would have written, under analogous circumstances. On the other hand, it were a poor compliment, and indeed a grave injustice to Savonarola, to suggest that in his letter he was merely temporising and throwing dust in the eyes of the Pope.

But although Fra Girolamo must be exonerated from the charge of disobedience, so far at least as concerns the letter which we have summarised, and also from that of insincerity, it seems to us that the letter sets in a very clear light that flaw in his character and conduct to which we have so often had occasion to refer. Not content with alleging his "reasonable excuses," which he was entitled to do, he is "certain" that it is not God's will that he should go to Rome. And instead of submitting his prophecies to the judgment of the Holy See, he sends—or will send—his book for the Pope's information. And somehow his challenge to all the world to judge from the event whether he be a true prophet or no

[1] Schnitzer, p. 636.

seems to strike a note which is hardly that of genuine humility. There is, too, a naïve assumption of the correctness of his own judgment in his assertion that "all good and wise citizens" are of opinion that he should stay at Florence. The good and the wise were, of course, those who supported his scheme of popular government. That he had on his side a majority of those who deserved these laudatory epithets we do not doubt; but were there none such among the congregations which frequented—not the Duomo or S. Marco—but Santa Croce, or Santa Maria Novella, or San Gallo? Were there none, even of the "good and wise," who would have experienced some relief from the tension of the times had Fra Girolamo quietly gone to Rome, as soon as his health permitted, in 1495, instead of persevering in that course of prophesying which led to his tragic end in 1498?

Unfortunately, the letter appears not to have reached the Pope at the time. This at least seems to be implied by Savonarola's words in his next letter ("I wonder that your Holiness should not have received my reply"), unless indeed we are to suppose that in saying this he was speaking in irony; as if the language of the Pope's second Brief could be reasonably accounted for on no other hypothesis than that of the miscarriage of his reply to the first. At any rate if, as Fra Girolamo suggests, the letter was indeed intercepted, the supposed silence of the Friar would—as Luotto observes—go far to account for the very severe tone of the next document in the series,[1] without recourse to the political motives to which the change of tone is referred by Dr Schnitzer.[2]

However this may be, on 8th September was despatched the Brief *Quia divini consilii*, which now claims our attention. By a strange blunder it was addressed, not to the convent of S. Marco, but to that of the Friars Minor at Santa Croce, who were certainly not on the best of terms with Fra Girolamo.[3] The text of the Brief is given by Quétif and Raynaldus, and has recently been reprinted from an older MS. by Luotto.[4]

[1] Luotto, p. 457.

[2] Schnitzer, p. 647.

[3] Fra Girolamo himself treats the address of the letter as a mistake (S. 2 on Exodus; Luotto, p. 465). And, indeed, it is difficult to imagine what the motive could have been for sending such a document to Santa Croce, unless indeed it were to avoid the risk of interception. Luotto is inclined to believe it "un semplice sbaglio di penna" (*loc. cit.*).

[4] Quétif and Raynaldus give the altogether erroneous and misleading date, 16th October 1497. The chronology of the documents has been settled beyond

"It is our duty [says the Pope] to encourage everything which tends to promote the piety, welfare, and peace of the faithful, and, on the other hand, to chastise with due severity novelties in teaching concealed under the cloak of a false simplicity, whereby schisms, heresies, and other disorders ('morum subversio') are wont to arise. We are informed that a certain Fra Hieronymo Savonarola of Ferrara indulges in such novelties, and that he has been led by the disturbed condition of affairs in Italy to such a pitch of folly ('mentis insaniam') as openly to declare, without any canonical attestation of the fact, that he has been sent by God, and that he holds converse with Him. Now, it is not enough for any one simply to declare that he has been sent by God, for any heretic might assert this; but he must confirm this alleged divine mission, which itself is invisible, either by working a miracle, or by adducing some special testimony of Holy Scripture.[1] Moreover, to declare that if one speaks falsely, then Jesus crucified and God Himself speaks falsely, is certainly a horrible and execrable form of adjuration. It is also not to be borne that he should declare that any one who does not believe his vain assertions is out of the way of salvation. There are other things said and written by the Friar which are full of danger, for there is reason to fear lest the rashness of 'false religious' should know no bounds, and lest vice should make an entrance into the Church under the appearance of virtue.[2] We had hoped by patient forbearance to persuade him to acknowledge the folly of the profession of prophecy which he makes; we had hoped that he would bend his steps into the way of solid truth, and that he would withdraw, as prudence and fidelity should have prompted him to do, the rash and unhallowed words which have been the means of disturbing the peace of the Church. We had hoped, in a word, for better things, and in particular that the sorrow which we had heretofore suffered from his unbridled arrogance, and from the scandalous separation (of his convent) from the congregation of his brethren in Lombardy—a separation which, as we have since learned, was obtained by the deceitful machinations of certain perverse friars—would ere now have been turned to joy by his humble submission.[3]

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dispute by Gherardi (pp. 386 *sqq.*). The text is in Luotto (pp. 606 *sqq.*). In one case, however, the punctuation of Luotto's MS. entirely spoils the sense, which is correctly expressed in Raynaldus' text. In that instance we follow Raynaldus.

[1] It is difficult to conceive what kind of "special testimony of Holy Scripture" could possibly be adduced in such a case. On the other hand, it is not easy to understand precisely what Savonarola intended to express when he spoke of his own prophecies as being in accordance with Scripture.

[2] A fine sentiment, surely, for a man like Alexander VI.

[3] It will be remembered that after many negotiations Cardinal Caraffa had fairly worried the Pope into putting his signature to the Brief of separation, and that as he left the palace he had met the messengers of the opposing party on their way to make fresh representations to the Pope. (*See* above, p. 97.) It is to this incident that allusion is made in the present Brief.

But our hopes have been disappointed. For whereas we ordered him to come to Rome, he has not only refused to obey, but has impudently spread abroad in writing those same things which he had already rashly uttered.

"Wherefore, as we are ourselves occupied with other matters, we have committed the whole case to Fra Sebastian de Madiis (Blessed Sebastian Maggi), the Vicar-General of the Order of Friars Preachers in Lombardy." Pending the examination of the case, Fra Girolamo is inhibited from preaching. The Convents of S. Marco at Florence and S. Domenico at Fiesole are hereby reunited to the Lombard Congregation. The Friars Domenico (Buonvicino) da Pescia, Tommaso Bussino, and Silvestro (Maruffi) da Firenze, are to proceed without delay to Bologna, and to be severally assigned to convents of their Order outside of the Florentine territory.

The Brief was immediately followed by another (9th September 1495), *Quam multa et varia*, addressed to Maggi :—

The Pope has heard news of Fra Girolamo which greatly disturbs him. The Friar, it is affirmed, utters things which are "a nostra religione et humana facultate penitus aliena," and are full of danger. He has refused to obey the summons to Rome. "Whence it is to be presumed that he does not walk according to the law of God, which prescribes obedience and humility." Wherefore Maggi is commanded to enquire diligently into the matter, and either himself to pass sentence, according to the statutes of his Order, or else to report on the matter to the Pope. He is further informed that the Convents of S. Marco and S. Domenico are once more placed under his obedience, being reunited to the Congregation of Lombardy.

This document has been brought to light by Luotto,[1] and it is noteworthy that it speaks of the Brief *Quia divini consilii* as addressed to S. Marco, not to Santa Croce. The address to Santa Croce must therefore have been, as has been said, a mere clerical blunder.

How far the former of these papal utterances (the Brief *Quia divini consilii*) was or was not justified in its representation of the facts of the case is a question which may be most conveniently discussed in the light of Fra Girolamo's answer, dated 29th September 1495, which is also given by Raynaldus, but under the altogether misleading date 29th October 1497.

"We received yesterday [writes the Friar] the Brief in which it is intimated to us that the two Convents of S. Marco and of S. Domenico (at Fiesole) are reunited to the Congregation of Lombardy, and in

[1] Luotto, pp. 605-6.

which three of our brethren are ordered to proceed to Bologna, and in which I, Hieronymo Savonarola, am accused of having said many foolish and scandalous things, and of having publicly preached them to the people. Further, by other letters (*i.e.* the Brief *Quam multa et varia*), my case is submitted to the judgment of the Vicar-General of the aforesaid Congregation. These documents I have received in a good spirit, and with the reverence due to them, for they show that your Holiness is solicitous for the good estate of the Church, and for the welfare of our souls. At the same time I am deeply grieved that the malice of men should have gone to such lengths, that certain persons have not scrupled to suggest to your Holiness a letter so full of false statements and perverse interpretations (of my conduct and motives). Your Holiness will, therefore, bear with me if I speak in my own defence, since I am the person who is principally affected. Nor will this be difficult, since I have spoken openly before the world, and I have ever taught in the church and in the temple, and in secret I have spoken nothing.[1] Hence I have so many thousands of witnesses that I make no doubt that I shall be able to defend myself without difficulty.

"My enemies, then, have suggested in the first instance, that I take delight in novelties of doctrine. This is plainly false, for it is known to all that in my preaching I have followed only the Sacred Scriptures, and the approved Doctors of the Church; *and that I have often said, and have set it down in writing, that I submit myself and all my concerns to the Holy Roman Church.* This, too, if I mistake not, I have signified to your Holiness in a certain letter of mine, of which, also, your Holiness has made mention in a former Brief addressed to me.[2] And if it be said that to predict future things is to introduce a new dogma, this is false, for such predictions have been made in every age. For to predict future events is in nowise contrary to the Christian religion, provided that such predictions are not contrary to faith or morals, or to natural reason; *nor has this ever been forbidden, nor can it be forbidden; for this were to impose a law upon God Himself,* who declares by Amos that 'The Lord God hath done nothing without revealing His secrets to His servants the prophets.'"

While, then, Savonarola professes to have submitted himself and all his concerns to the Holy Roman Church, he at the same time declares his independence of all authority in the very matter concerning which submission had been, or might be, demanded of him. He wrote, we believe, in good faith. But the attitude of mind which his words disclose surely constitutes ground enough, apart from all political reasons and personal considerations, for the Pope's

[1] He had, however, privately written to the King of France, when the latter was in Rome, encouraging him, in God's name, to take in hand the reform of the Church. *See* above, pp. 141 *sqq.*

[2] This letter, as has been said, has not been brought to light.

intervention. A man may be the innocent, or only partially culpable, victim of his own error of judgment, but his innocence, or the comparatively small degree of his guilt, is no reason why his error should not be corrected. It was not so much the things which he prophesied as the claim to be the judge of his own prophetical mission which gave cause for repressive measures.

It is not true that the perturbed condition of affairs in Italy has deranged his mind. His predictions had commenced five, nay ten, years previously, long before any disturbance had arisen.

Here he seems to have been justified, to some extent, in his plea. But the point is a minor one; and the Pope might still urge that the stirring events of the time had stimulated the Friar to what he regarded as fresh extravagances. It was possible that Alexander might have been mistaken. Savonarola was certainly mistaken, to say the least, in his assertion of what we may call prophetical independence. Was it an error into which a man of deep humility would have fallen?

It is not true that he has professed to have been sent by God. All who have heard him know that he has never said this; and in his writings, which may be read by all, he has set it down that he has been sent by his superiors, like most other preachers. Thousands can bear witness that he has never asserted that he was sent by God alone; and he has never asserted that he converses with God.

But he had plainly declared, in his former letter to the Pope himself, that God had commanded him to make known certain things. He had declared in this very letter that no one had any right to prohibit his predictions, for which therefore he claimed divine authority. He had explicitly taken as true of himself the words addressed by God to Ezechiel: "Behold I have set thee as a watchman in the midst of the land," and the rest. To say now that he had never claimed to have his mission from God alone, seems to us very like a subterfuge. So too, it might be perfectly true that he had never said, in so many words: "I converse with God." But, to name only one instance, he had in his nineteenth sermon on Aggaeus, delivered less than a year previously to the date of this present letter, narrated in detail a long colloquy, in which God had bidden him to give to the people of Florence a sound system of government.

But even if he had said so he would have incurred no penalty; for there is no word to any such effect either in Holy Writ or in the whole

of the Canon or Civil Law. And to make such a law (declaring it to be unlawful to profess to hold converse with God) would be foolish and wicked. For no one can impose a law upon God, who is free to converse with whom He will, and to bid those with whom He converses to say: "Thus saith the Lord God," as the prophets said of old.

A distinction, after the fashion of the schools, seems to be here necessary. God is free to converse with whom He will: Yes. The man who believes himself to be the subject of such divine communications is at liberty to proclaim them irrespectively of the ecclesiastical authority instituted by God Himself: No. Savonarola's teaching on this head, as expressed in this letter, is plainly subversive of ecclesiastical order and discipline. This letter, we may add, is not among those writings of Fra Girolamo which have been declared to be free from dogmatic or moral error.

He has not used the form of adjuration attributed to him in the Brief. He has only spoken hypothetically ('in casu tantum'); that is to say, after declaring certain truths which Christ has made known to him, he has sometimes added: "If I speak falsely, then Christ speaketh falsely."

And this is precisely what the Pope had charged him with doing. Whether such a form of adjuration deserves to be called "horrendum et execrabile" appears to be a question of taste in the "derangement of epitaphs." The form of words surely cannot be justified.

He has never said that whoever does not believe in his assertions is out of the way of salvation. But knowing many of his predictions to be from God, he has said that if any one obstinately refuses to believe them, and has made up his mind to contradict them, this is a sign that he is not in the state of grace (extra gratiam sit); for grace always inclines the mind to the truth, and, therefore, he who is in a state of grace cannot go against the truth. But as for those who contradict his assertions without obstinacy, he has said and written that they may be in the state of grace; nor has he said that to contradict him is a sin, but only that under certain conditions it is a sign that a man is in a state of sin.

With all allowance for the Friar's explanations, we do not see how his proposition can be cleared from the charge of rashness. The interpretation put upon it in the Brief, even though not strictly correct, is that which the average hearer or reader would inevitably have put upon it; and if this is so, then Fra Girolamo's words were open to censure.

He has not uttered foolish or scandalous things, but, on the contrary, things which greatly tended to the salvation of souls, as the whole people of Florence can testify.

The Pope had never denied, on the contrary, he had fully recognised the good qualities of Fra Girolamo's preaching. But in his judgment those good qualities had been obscured and overshadowed by the utterance of "foolish and scandalous things."

No man can be found in all the world who has ever heard him make so arrogant an assertion as to say that he was a prophet. On the contrary, thousands can bear witness that he has often declared that he was "neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet."

It is quite true that this protest is to be found in more than one passage of his sermons. But one of the most remarkable features in the utterances of Savonarola is the ease with which—unconsciously, as it would seem—he contradicts himself. Even here, in one and the same sentence, he declares that he is no prophet, and yet insists that he cannot be justly condemned for prophesying.[1]

There is and can be no law forbidding a man to say that he foretells future things by divine inspiration, unless under this pretext he leads people to evil-doing or heresy, or does anything contrary to what is written in Deuteronomy,[2] which no one can say of him. And as for the criterion between a true and a false prophet which is there laid down, viz. the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of his predictions, this is not to be understood of immediate verification; otherwise Isaiah and Jeremiah and many others ought to have been slain as false prophets, since many things which they foretold did not come to pass till long afterwards. Hence it follows that if any one declares that by the spirit of God he foretells the future, and if what he says is not contrary to faith or to Holy Scripture, then we ought patiently to await the event, and not to despise him, since God has many hidden servants, and the Apostle bids us not to despise prophets. Wherefore, since many things which he has predicted have come to pass, he is not to be blamed for having foretold other things to come. If, however, these other things do not happen in their time, then he will be open to blame; but he is certain that they will happen, and that no jot of them will pass away (unfulfilled). It is well known that his words have brought peace to Florence; and had it not been so, all Italy would

[1] "E sappi che *come Amos* aveva in quel tempo a dire e prenunziare quelle cose, *così ho io a te in questo tempo;* e *come era certo* Amos di quello che diceva, *così sono certo io* di quello che io ti dico, *e quel medesimo lume che aveva Amos è questo nel quale io ti prenunzio queste cose*" (Sermon on 8th March 1596, *Scelta*, p. 216).

[2] Deut. xiii. *sqq.*, xviii. 15 *sqq.*

have been in commotion. "Moreover, had my words been believed, Italy would not now be smitten with such tribulations as we see. For whereas I foresaw its afflictions . . . I foretold that a sword was to come, and I showed that penance was the only means whereby peace might be attained." All Italy, then, ought to be grateful to him for having taught her the way to peace such as Florence now enjoys, a peace which she might also have enjoyed had she betaken herself to the one remedy of penance.

As for what concerns the reunion with the Lombard Congregation, it is an injustice to call religious men of edifying life "perverse friars." It is false that the separation was obtained by the efforts of some, whereas a public document shows it was asked for by all. It was sought and obtained, not that we might indulge in laxity, but that we might live a life of greater strictness. Nor was the separation obtained in a surreptitious manner ("subdole"), but after long discussion, and in view of the fact that the Tuscan Congregation had originally been independent of the Lombard. It was rather the Brief of union which had been surreptitiously obtained.[1]

It is not true that he had refused to go to Rome. He had written in accordance with the ordinances of the Canon Law, to set forth his reasonable excuses, which he now repeats. He is surprised that his Holiness should not have received the letter, of which he has now sent a second copy, so that the Pope may see how falsely he has been accused of disobedience.

As for the appointment of the Vicar-General of the Lombard Congregation to enquire into his case, Maggi is a judge whom he has every right to regard with suspicion; for it is notorious what controversies have prevailed between the Lombard and the Tuscan Congregations, and how the Vicar and his brethren have not ceased to molest the convents of Tuscany.[2] It is contrary to all principles of justice to appoint an enemy as judge; nor can a man be lawfully required to appear before such a judge. He is therefore justified in declining to obey his Holiness in this matter ("impune non paremus Sanctitati Vestræ") in view of the grave causes which he can allege. He has many enemies whose violence and plots make it impossible for him to leave Florence, as he has already explained in his former letter. How then can his Holiness put him under obedience to the Vicar-General of Lombardy, who will have it in his power to send him to places where his life will be in danger? And as for the source of this danger, it has arisen simply because he has proclaimed the truth, and because the truth excites hatred. He concludes with an eloquent recital of the services which he has rendered to the city of Florence in liberating her

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[1] *See* above, pp. 91 *sqq.*

[2] The letters (18th June, 16th November 1493) in which the General G. Torriano enjoins upon the Fathers of the Lombard Congregation not to molest the Convent of S. Marco have been mentioned above, pp. 101-2.

from the selfish and ambitious faction which sought to reduce her to servitude; from the dissensions and bloodshed which would have resulted from their triumph, and lastly, from the indignation and the sword of the French king. "And is this the reward which I receive for my labours from the ingratitude of men? Yet I do not repent of my toils, for our reward is great in heaven, but men are false and vain, and vain are the hopes which are placed in them." And since the accusations which have been made against him are false, and proceed from the malice of enemies who seek his life, he trusts that the Holy Father will consider him not disobedient, but prudent, if he refrains for the moment from compliance with the Pope's demands, in the full expectation of receiving from him a full acquittal on all the charges which have been made against him. If his Holiness will send a prudent and impartial man ("justum et non suspectum") to enquire into the matter, he may learn the whole truth from the universal testimony of the people; "and as for me, I am ready to amend my conduct wheresoever I may be, and publicly to retract all my errors. Let your Holiness deign to signify to me what the things are, out of all that I have said and written, which I must retract, and I will do so most willingly; for now and always, as I have often said and written, I submit myself and all my words and writings to the correction of the Holy Roman Church and of your Holiness, to whose prayers, prostrate at your feet, I most humbly commend myself and all my brethren.

There is obviously much in this letter which can hardly fail to awaken sympathy. However fully the modern reader may be convinced that Fra Girolamo was deceived about his prophetic mission, he cannot but recognise his greatness of soul, and it is easy to imagine the bitterness of the sorrow with which he must have read the papal Brief, with its needlessly harsh expressions, dictated, as it seemed to him, by the malice of his enemies, and threatening as it did the ruin of what he believed to be the work of God. If again we remember who and what manner of men they were that now were brought into conflict, we shall surely make large allowance for the Friar, and no one, it may be hoped, would be disposed to judge him harshly.

Again, whatever degree of perversity of judgment Fra Girolamo's reply to the Pope may be thought to reveal, it is difficult not to believe that under the wise handling of an ecclesiastical superior like-minded with himself as regards ideals and aims, he might have been brought to a more reasonable frame of mind. But to say all this is not quite the same thing as to uphold his action objectively considered. And to minimise his fault is not the same thing as to hold him entirely blameless. For unless we recognise some alloy of

pride in his words and conduct on this occasion, they are not easily to be accounted for; and where there is pride there is at least some degree of moral culpability at the root of the matter, though not necessarily at each individual step in a prolonged course of action.

But leaving this point aside, in all that part of Savonarola's letter which is concerned with the appointment of the Vicar-General of Lombardy to take cognisance of his cause there appears to us to be some confusion of ideas. It was not the question of the reunion of the Congregations which was submitted to Maggi. This would indeed have been to make one of the parties to the case the judge with whom the decision was to lie. But as the Pope in the plenitude of his power had effected the separation at the earnest instance of Savonarola and his fellow-religious, in opposition to the wishes of the superiors of the Lombard Congregation, so also at the instance of those same superiors, he could lawfully revoke his former act, which had led to what seemed to him undesirable results. The reunion being decreed, the person to whom the examination of Savonarola's teaching and conduct would in the natural course of things be committed was the superior to whose obedience he was now restored. No one could have blamed Fra Girolamo had he done no more than to petition for more favourable terms for his fellow-religious and for himself, and to expose once more the grounds on which the continued separation of the Congregation seemed to him desirable: but to protest against the papal ordinance as canonically unjust was perhaps to carry resistance at least one step too far. And the suggestion that Maggi would be likely to send him to some place where his life would be in danger was a slur upon the good faith and prudence of one who was after all a man of distinguished virtue, whom the Church has since honoured with the title of *Beatus*.

If account be taken of the character of Alexander VI., and on the hypothesis that he was so entirely under the influence of Savonarola's enemies as some of Fra Girolamo's apologists seem to suppose, it might perhaps have been expected that his next letter would have been full of indications of personal resentment, and of a determination to carry out, in spite of Fra Girolamo's representations, the project of a reunion of S. Marco and the convents subject thereto with the Congregation of Lombardy.[1] Such, however, is emphatically not the character of the Brief, *Licet uberius*, which was issued

[1] It will be remembered that only two or three of the Dominican houses in Tuscany had embraced the reform of S. Marco.

on 16th October 1495. Indeed, what we have said of the Pope's first letter might be said of this, viz. that in substance, and apart from a few individual phrases, it is just such a document as might have emanated from the holiest and most zealous of Popes. We give, as before, the substance of the Brief :—

"We have [says the Pope] already fully explained to you how greatly we are displeased at the disturbed state of things which prevails in Florence ; and the more so because it owes its origin to your preaching. For you leave aside the reprehension of vice and the praise of virtue (!) to predict future things, and you publicly declare that you do so by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Such utterances are often the cause why simple-minded persons stray from the path of salvation and from the obedience due to the Holy Roman Church. You ought rather to procure peace and union than to put forward these prophecies—as they are called by the common people. You ought to have reflected that the conditions of the time are altogether unsuited to such teaching, which would be calculated to foment discord even in time of peace, much more to increase it in time of disturbance.

"These considerations had determined us, after mature deliberation, to summon you to our presence here, that you might either purge yourself of the charges brought against you, or suffer just punishment. Since, however, we have recently understood from certain of our brethren the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, and from your own letter, that you are prepared in all things to submit yourself to the judgment (correctioni) of the Church, as becomes a Christian and religious man, we are greatly rejoiced thereat ; and we begin to be persuaded that you have preached these things, not with any evil intent (malo animo), but out of a certain simplicity and a zeal, misguided though it be, for the vineyard of the Lord. However, that we may not fail in our duty, we now prescribe, in virtue of holy obedience, that from henceforth you desist from all preaching, whether in public or in private, until such time as it shall be possible for you to come to our presence, not under the protection of an armed escort, after your present fashion of going abroad, but with the security, quietness, and modesty which becomes a religious man, or until we shall make some other provision. And if you do this (*i.e.* desist from preaching), as we trust that you will, we in the meanwhile suspend the operation of our former Brief that you may live in peace according to the dictates of your own conscience."[1]

It will be noted that the Pope implicitly recognises as valid one at least of the excuses offered by Savonarola in his letter of 31st July, viz. the danger of travelling ; also that he suspends the appointment

[1] The Brief is given by Raynaldus (under the erroneous date, 16th October 1497), and more correctly by Gherardi, pp. 390-91.

of Maggi as judge of the case, and likewise suspends or withdraws the command to reunite the Tuscan convents with the Lombard Congregation. Apart from the circumstantial portions or motive clauses of the Brief, a more lenient sentence—on the hypothesis that the Friar's prophetical mission was at least doubtful—could hardly have been looked for if a saint had occupied the See of Peter. It is in the reasons assigned by the Pope for his action that the real sting lies. How, it may be asked, could he allege that Savonarola had "left aside the reprehension of vice and the praise of virtue" to attend to prophecy? The expression was certainly not well chosen; but at the same time it is clear that a statement of this kind must have been intended, and ought to be understood, not absolutely, but relatively. So far as the sermons of Fra Girolamo were taken up with predictions, and with the promulgation of his visions and divine colloquies, to that extent they were not concerned with those other matters which more properly belonged to the preacher's office. Again, at first sight it seems hard that the man to whom Florence was indebted for having passed through an acute political crisis almost without bloodshed should now be accused of fomenting discord and originating disturbances; and the more so because there was, at the moment, no actual disturbance within the walls of the city. Moreover, it is to be remembered that at the very time when these words were written Piero de' Medici, with a body of troops commanded by Virginio Orsini and subsidised by the Pope himself, was in the neighbourhood of Siena awaiting an opportunity to attack Florence.[1]

"Quis tulerit Gracchos de seditione querentes?"

Might it not very fairly be said that it was Alexander himself, and not Fra Girolamo, who was fomenting discord in Florence, and that the accusation was nothing better than a piece of odious hypocrisy on the part of a Pope whose private life and political intrigues were

[1] Manfredi to d'Este, 12th October 1495 (Cappelli, n. 90). "Il Papa ed i Veneziani volevano infatti rimettere Piero de' Medici" (Villari, ii. 385). Sforza was no friend to Piero, but to forward the purposes of the League he had agreed to forward the project. Bentivoglio of Bologna, subsidised by Sforza, was to have attacked Florence from the north, while Siena and Perugia were to have sent troops from the south. But the whole plan of campaign collapsed, and Piero returned to Rome without having effected or even attempted anything serious.

the scandal of Christendom?[1] The sole and sufficient answer to such a plea lies in the obvious principle that two wrongs do not make a right. Alexander's misdeeds do not justify, objectively, the action of Savonarola. The motives which actuated the Pope on this occasion were, no doubt, very far from pure. At the same time there is no ground—so far as we are aware—for imputing to him any conscious dishonesty in promoting the League of Italian States against the French invader, nor can it be said that the scheme for the restoration of Piero (which would have carried with it the adhesion of Florence to the League) was necessarily unjust. Savonarola, by the vehemence of his invectives against "tyrants" during this very month of October, 1495, had done more than any other man in Florence to make the peaceful return of Piero impossible, and had necessitated (so the Pope might argue) the present hostile movement against the Republic. In a word, whereas the Friar's general exhortations to peace and concord in the autumn and winter of 1494 had borne excellent fruits, his subsequent denunciation of all and sundry who might seek to alter the new constitution might plausibly be held to have a very opposite tendency; nor could it be reasonably alleged that it was purely and simply his campaign against vice, as such, which had rendered the protection of an armed escort a necessity for the Friar. We do not venture to assert that the Pope judged rightly, still less that the expressions which he used in his Brief were, in all cases, wisely chosen. To have spoken of "dissensions" rather than "disturbances" would perhaps have been more germane to the purpose. For dissensions there certainly were, and they were due in no small measure to the preaching of Fra Girolamo. But the fundamental fact remains, that Borgia occupied—however unworthily—the post of command; and although his direct authority did not extend to purely political affairs, he at least had a right to demand that his policy should not be thwarted by an irresponsible preacher who claimed a direct divine sanction for his opposition, and, at the same time, gave proofs of a kind of obstinacy which alone was enough to cast suspicion on the genuineness of his alleged revelation.

But, however this may be, it is to the credit of Fra Girolamo that for some months after the somewhat tardy arrival of the Brief *Licet*

[1] This was, in fact, the answer which Savonarola actually made, a few months later, to this very reproach (Villari and Casanova, *Scelta di Prediche*, n. p. 199).

uberius he obeyed the Papal mandate, and abstained from preaching. And in fact more than a year elapsed before the Pope once more issued a Brief relating to the affairs of Savonarola. But although the intervening period is barren of such documents, we possess a long series of letters and memoranda written by other persons during the interval, which are of considerable interest and importance as illustrating the course of events. There are letters from the Ten, and occasionally from the Signory, to the Florentine ambassadors in Rome, and from the ambassadors to the Signory and the Ten; there is the correspondence of Somenzi and Tranchedino with the Duke of Milan, and that of Manfredi with the Duke of Ferrara; and finally there is the diary of that ardent Piagnone, Luca Landucci. The letters in question are scattered through the collections of Villari, Marchese, Gherardi, Cappelli, and del Lungo, but they have never been brought together in one continuous series. It has, therefore, seemed worth while to do here on a more extended scale what we have already done in the foregoing chapters in regard of similar documents, *i.e.* to arrange and summarise them in a kind of calendar.

26*th October;* Manfredi to d'Este.[1]—Savonarola continues to preach. He has told Manfredi that no suspension has come from the Pope, and that he trusts his Holiness will impose silence on his calumniators, but that if matters should go further, and the Pope should be unwilling to accept his vindication, he hopes to receive effective support from d'Este, who will, he is sure, represent his case to the Pope in its true light. (The Brief of 16th October had obviously not yet been delivered.)

13*th November;* The Signory to Alexander VI.[2]—In the midst of all our troubles and dangers nothing has helped us more, or more efficaciously contributed to preserve us from worse evils, than the presence and labours of Fra Hieronymo of Ferrara, a man whom the divine mercy has sent us to save us from ruin. He is a man distinguished by holiness and learning; but what more than any thing else has captivated the minds of our people is his prediction of future events. Wherein, if he had erred, we should have known that his predictions were not of God, but were fables born of pride. But things being as they are, his authority in our city has come to be immense. He has shown himself not merely a compassionate father, but a counsellor divinely wise (consuluit, perfecit divine). And although there are envious men who, in their hostility to our welfare, have calumniated him to your Holiness, we claim to bear a more trustworthy witness to his life and character. "We need, Holy

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[1] Cappelli, n. 92.

[2] Villari, i. Append. p. cxiii.

Father, we need this man of God and his preaching, whereby he may bring our city, as he has ever done, to a better way of life, and to the service of the living God. We therefore supplicate your Holiness to allow Fra Hieronymo to resume his ministry of preaching, and we assure you that you can show no greater favour to the people of Florence than by granting our request."

13th and 17th November; The Signory to Cardinal Caraffa.[1]—They are grateful for the favourable letter which his Eminence has written to Savonarola. This man has certainly been sent to them by God Himself to save them from ruin. He has foretold future things, and everything which he has said has proved true. He has helped the people by his salutary advice and by his virtuous example, and has kept them, by his preaching, in the fear of God. Yet evil-disposed persons have endeavoured to stir up the indignation of the Pope against him. But they (the Signory) are thoroughly cognisant of the soundness of his doctrine and the holiness of his life, and they claim that their testimony should be received rather than that of the irresponsible persons (fugitivis quibusdam, ut ita dixerimus) who neither know the truth nor have in them the fear of God. They therefore beg the Cardinal to obtain permission from the Pope that Fra Girolamo may preach during the coming Advent; and, as time presses, and it may be difficult to obtain a Brief, they urge him to get the leave, if possible, *vivae vocis oraculo.*

The urgency of the Signory was, however, in vain; nor was a letter despatched by the Ten to Becchi on 5th December,[2] begging him to press the matter on the attention of Caraffa, more successful. It is curious that Landucci in his diary does not notice the silence of Savonarola till 11th December, on which day he writes: "We hear (ci fu) that the Pope has forbidden Fra Girolamo to preach, and this prohibition he has observed for some days."[3] The prudence which had so long kept secret the receipt of the Brief of 16th October deserves commendation.

But although Savonarola, in obedience to the Brief, refrained from preaching, he was by no means inactive; for to this period belongs the initiation of one of the most characteristic of his efforts for the spiritual advantage of Florence, viz. the reform and organisation of the children of the city, in whom he hoped—like S. Francis Xavier at Goa—to find efficacious instruments whereby to forward the great work of moral regeneration. Concerning the actual measures which he adopted, the processions, the collection of alms, the reformation of the Carnival (which first took effect in 1496), the

[1] Gherardi, pp. 130 *sqq.* [2] Gherardi, p. 132. [3] Landucci, p. 120.

pyramid of vanities (1497 and 1498), and the institution of the children's police, enough has been said in a former chapter. But we cannot refrain from quoting here some words on the subject from the diary of Landucci. On 7th February 1496, when the apostolate of the children had been in progress for some weeks, he writes :—

"The children had received such encouragement from Fra Girolamo to reprove unbecoming modes of dress (le disoneste posature) and the vice of gambling, that when people said: 'Here come the Friar's children,' every gambler, however bold he might be, would take himself off, and women attired and conducted themselves with all modesty. The children were held in such reverence that every one abstained from scandalous vice. Not a word on such matters was to be heard from young or old during that holy time; but it was short. The wicked (e tristi) have proved more powerful than the good. Brief as it was, may God be praised that I saw that holy time; and I pray that He may give us back once more that holy and chaste mode of life. That this was indeed a blessed time any one may judge who will consider the things which then were done."[1]

Then he goes on to describe the Carnival of 1496, and closes his description with the words: "I have written these things because they are true, and I have seen them, and have experienced in them such consolation (ò sentito di tal dolcezza), and children of my own were among those blessed and modest bands." He returns to the subject on 17th and 27th February, and 8th and 27th March (Palm Sunday). One may feel very sure that the intercession of the Guardian Angels of those children was efficacious on Fra Girolamo's behalf.

Meanwhile the city magistrates resumed their efforts to obtain the removal of the inhibition from preaching, with a view to the approaching Lent.[2] The available evidence (as will appear from the letters hereafter referred to) points to the conclusion that Caraffa succeeded in extorting from Alexander either an explicit verbal permission, or, more probably, some words which might be interpreted as implying a tacit consent, in view, however, of an express or tacit understanding that Savonarola should abstain in his sermons

[1] *Diario*, p. 124. It is curious that the occasion for these remarks is given by the mention of what would seem to have been an act of indiscreet zeal on the part of these little ones ("e fanciugli levorono di capo una veliera a una fanciulla, e fuvvi scandalo di sua giente," p. 123).

[2] The Signory to Caraffa and the Ten to Becchi, 28th January and 5th February (Gherardi, p. 132, Marchese, n. 1).

from meddling in Roman affairs. The situation was sufficiently critical to engage the attention of the Signory in a debate as to whether Fra Girolamo should or should not be invited to preach the Lenten course in the Duomo. On 8th February Somenzi reports that matters are going against the Friar, and that he hopes for a decision in accordance with the wishes of his master.[1] On 11th February, however, a resolution was passed inviting Savonarola to preach during Lent, or previously, if he shall so determine, either in the Duomo or elsewhere, at his discretion.[2] Only the actual terms of the resolution are given, and in the absence of a report of the previous discussion it is impossible to say whether the real or supposed verbal permission of the Pope was or was not put forward as a principal reason in its favour.

At any rate Savonarola once more ascended the pulpit of S. Marco during the Carnival, a few days after the resolution of the Signory had been communicated to him, and it is due to him to say that he declared that he did so with the Pope's permission.[3] On the other hand, in his sermon on Ash Wednesday, 17th February, when he opened the Lenten course in the Duomo, he made no reference to any such permission. He begins his discourse by explaining the reasons why he has been so long silent.

Is it because he has had some scruple about preaching? No. Is it because an excommunication has been sent from Rome? No: for even if such a document had arrived, he has already declared that it would be of no effect. He has been silent because he wished to look into his own life and teaching: "I said in my heart—perhaps thou hast not looked well to thy ways, and thy tongue has been led astray; and I have therefore considered them one by one." But his conscience has acquitted him. He has always held, and does hold, entire and inviolate, the teaching of the Holy Roman Catholic Church, and has written to Rome,

[1] "La praticha contro il Frate è reducta fin al presente a bono termine, e spero anchora l'haverà bono fine secundo el desiderio" (del Lungo, n. 3). The letter is dated 8th February 1495, but belongs to 1496. Del Lungo has here overlooked the difference between the Florentine and Roman "style" of dating, which has been the source of much confusion.

[2] Gherardi, p. 133. A letter from Manfredi to d'Este, assigned by Cappelli to 5th February 1496, would seem to imply that he had already begun to preach (Cappelli, n. 96). But we venture to suggest, with some confidence, that the letter is dated after the Florentine style, and belongs to 1497. Our conjecture is confirmed by the circumstance that the terms of the letter, so far as it concerns the preaching of Savonarola, are almost identical with those of a despatch from Somenzi, dated 26th February 1497 (Villari, ii. Append. p. xxv.).

[3] Somenzi to Sforza, 16th February (*infra*).

that "if I have either preached or written any thing heretical, I am willing to correct it, and to make here a public recantation." But, he declares, though the Church is infallible, it does not follow that every command of an ecclesiastical superior is to be obeyed. "The Pope cannot command me to do anything contrary to charity, or contrary to the Gospel. I do not believe that the Pope wishes me to do anything of the kind, but were he to do so I should tell him: 'Thou art not now a good shepherd, thou art not the Roman Church, thou art in error.'" As for himself, he did not regard himself as under any obligation to obey a command to leave Florence, for every one knew that the motive of such an order was solely political hatred. "If I saw most clearly that my leaving a city would be attended with its spiritual and temporal ruin, I would not obey the command of any living man to quit it. O ye who write such lies to Rome, what will you now write? I know well what you will write. . . . You will write that I have said that we ought not to obey the Pope, and that I do not mean to obey him. That I do not say. What I have spoken I have written, and you will see that you cannot gainsay it."

Nor did he, in this lenten course (on Amos and Zacharias) confine himself to abstract declarations of principle. Now, more than ever, he inveighed against the vices of the Roman court, more especially in the sermon, delivered on the second Sunday in Lent, on "the fat kine that are in the mountains of Samaria" (Amos iv. 1), wherein Samaria is made to stand for Rome, and the "fat kine" for the harlots whose numbers disgraced the city of the Popes. On the fourth Sunday in Lent he cried out:—

"Prepare thyself, O Rome, for great will be thy punishments. Thou shalt be put in irons; thou shalt be put to the sword; fire and flame shall consume thee. . . . Rome shall be stricken with a grievous sickness, even unto death. . . . I will bring down upon Italy a race of men the most wicked that can be found; I will humble her princes, I will bring down the pride of Rome: that race will take possession of their holy places, will defile their churches, and . . . I will turn them into stalls and styes for horses and hogs." Even this, the preacher declares, will be less displeasing to God than the uses to which they are now put.[1]

It was hardly to be supposed that language of this kind could pass unnoticed at the Papal court. And, indeed, if the character of the sermons on Amos and Zacharias be steadily kept in mind, the forbearance of the Pope, and the strenuous advocacy of several of the Cardinals, will afford more matter for surprise than the evidence

[1] "Dapoi che l'hanno fatto stalle di meretrici, io le farò stalle di porci e cavalli, perchè questo manco dispiace a Dio che il farle stalle di meretrici" (Villari, i. 430).

which contemporary documents afford of Alexander's indignation at the boldness of Fra Girolamo. We resume our calendar of letters and memoranda.

16*th February* 1496; Somenzi to Sforza.—The writer relates the *festa* held on the last day of the Carnival, under the direction of Savonarola, the collection of alms by the children, and the procession with cries of "Viva Cristo." "The Friar has publicly declared that he intends to preach during the whole of this Lent, saying that he has had the Pope's leave."[1]

20*th February* 1496; Tranchedino to Sforza.—Bentivoglio and Vinciguerra have been much amused at hearing of the astuteness with which Fra Gyronymo (*sic*) contrives to curry favour with the people of Florence. "I assure you that it is not true that he has had leave from the Pope to preach, though he asserts that he has; he has simply taken leave. It is enough for him that he is not actually prevented."[2]

9*th March;* The Ten to Becchi.[3]—Becchi is thanked for his efforts to obtain for Savonarola permission to continue his preaching. His ill success so far is not his fault, but is due to the calumnious accusations of the Friar's enemies. They too (*i.e.* the Ten) are in a manner affected by the accusations, which reflect upon their own prudence. But they wish his Holiness to be assured that Savonarola has never exceeded "the measure which universal custom allows to preachers." If he had really exceeded this measure, and had attacked the Pope personally, they would not have suffered it. Therefore, Becchi is to persevere.

On 10th March a *Pratica* was held to discuss the contents of letters received from Gualterotti, the Florentine envoy at Milan, and from Becchi.[4] One speaker, whose name has not been preserved, advises that the Pope be told that if Fra Girolamo has preached, this is on the ground of the great confidence which he has in his Holiness, and more especially on the strength of a certain letter from the Cardinal of Naples, and by reason of the great fruit which his preaching has produced, and does produce, and by no means with the intention of displeasing the Pope. Piero Capponi, more cautious, is of opinion that if there is no Papal prohibition, then every effort should be made to secure the continuance of Savonarola's sermons; but if there has been a prohibition, then some learned men should be deputed to confer with Fra Girolamo on the matter, so that nothing should be done against the will of the Pope; for we must "render to

[1] Del Lungo, n. 5; Villari, i. Append. pp. cxi. *sqq.*

[2] Del Lungo, n. 6. The last words are obscure: "Dove li è permesso che non li sia devetata." Tranchedino writes from Bologna, where he acted as envoy from Sforza to Bentivoglio. Vinciguerra was the Venetian envoy at the same court.

[3] Marchese, n. 2.

[4] Gherardi, p. 136.

Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and to God things that are God's," and, besides, in past times the censures of the Pope have done much injury to the city, and in particular to its merchants trading abroad.

11*th March;* Becchi to the Ten.[1]—The Pope has shown himself somewhat appeased, but still complains of the permission to preach which you have given to Fra Girolamo, and that the Friar holds the people to the French alliance against his will. He exhorts you to do now what you ought to have done two months ago, and not to give up the government of the city into the hands of the Friar, "o a altri." The Cardinals who are your friends say the same.

12*th March;* The Ten to Becchi.[2]—He is to try to get leave for the short remainder of Lent. It is not true that Savonarola preaches against the League.

18*th March;* Becchi to the Ten.[3]—The Pope is again angry. He had understood from Caraffa that the Friar had promised not to meddle with Roman affairs which do not concern him or his office ("gli era suto promisso non s'impaccerebbe delle cose di qua, come dicono non essere suo offitio ne appertenersi a lui"). The Pope advises you to exhort him accordingly; it should be enough for him that his Holiness tolerates ("supporta") his preaching againt his will.

18*th March;* Somenzi to Sforza.[4]—The city is full of discord by reason of Savonarola, who governs the city after his own fashion, and appoints the Signory and all the magistrates (!). Two-thirds of the people are in favour of the Friar. He has said in public that the people are not bound to obey the Pope, and that if he were to place the city under an interdict, this would be invalid, because he is no true Pope. It is thought that he will soon do so, for the Eight have not allowed the Pope's messenger to present the inhibition, "but I understand that they have conducted him outside the city."

20*th March;* Becchi to the Ten.[5]—Four Cardinals have interceded for Savonarola, but in vain. The Pope will grant no spiritual favours to the city in the present state of things. Such is the power of calumny.

24*th March;* Pandolfini (Bishop of Pistoia) to the Ten.[6]—He has had a long conversation with the Pope (chiefly on political matters). As regards Fra Girolamo, "I told his Holiness that I had understood that he had been inhibited from preaching, but that afterwards permission

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[1] Gherardi, p. 137.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 138.

[4] Del Lungo, n. 3. Del Lungo and Cosci (pp. 299 *sqq.*) erroneously ascribe this letter to the previous year, 1495. Both have been deceived by a date given in the Florentine style.

[5] Gherardi, p. 139.

[6] Marchese, n. 3. We pass over here three short letters of Becchi and of the Ten dated 24th, 25th, and 26th March (Gherardi, pp. 139 *sqq.*).

had been given through a certain Cardinal (avere inteso esserli stata inibita la predica . . . e poi permessa per relatione d'uno Cardinale); that accordingly we did not consider ourselves disobedient, especially as the preacher's intentions were good." His Holiness replied: "Well, we will not speak of Fra Hyeronimo (*sic*) now," and so turned the conversation.

26*th March;* Becchi to the Ten.[1]—The Pope and the Cardinals declare that our city suffers great dishonour and some danger from allowing such license to the Friar, and to the children and to the common people. The complaint now is not of Fra Girolamo, but of the government which permits these things, viz. (1) that he persists in preaching contrary to the will of the Pope; (2) that he speaks ill of the Pope, the Cardinals, and of the whole court of Rome, as if he had some special charge of them ("come s'apartenessi particolarmente a sua Paternità"); (3) that he writes and affirms that he is a prophet, and that he converses with God; (4) that he does away with freedom of discussion, in order to give more assurance ("per dare ardire") to the children and to the common people; (5) that even if all this were false, it is dishonourable to the city that all the world should be able to say that it is governed by a Friar and a troop of children; and indeed it is feared lest this government by children will have some scandalous and disastrous result for the State. In a word, you are accused of having lost your heads, and these are the things that the Pope complains of in conversation alike with the envoys of the League, and with those who speak in your favour.

30*th March;* Becchi to the Ten.[2]—He understands that the Pope has committed the case of Savonarola to two Cardinals and to two Bishops, and has ordered Torriano, the General of the Dominicans, to proceed juridically against the Friar.

30*th March;* The Ten to Becchi.[3]—All these accusations of which you speak are fables and inventions of our enemies. But as Lent is now past, it is useless to ask any further permission.

5*th April;* Becchi to the Ten.[4]—The ambassador reports the discussion held by a commission of fourteen Dominican theologians, in presence of the Pope, on the affair of Savonarola. The Pope began by showing that he wished by all means to punish him "as a heretic, a schismatic, a man disobedient to the Holy See and superstitious," and to punish not him alone, but all who favour him ("che per lui fussino"). Hereupon one Master Nicholas, of Naples, entered a vigorous protest ("et parmi si portassi assai honestamente"); but many others followed who attacked the Friar with warmth and bitterness, all being of opinion that some measure should be taken against him except one ("uno giovane"), who valiantly

[1] Gherardi, pp. 140 *sqq.*
[2] Gherardi, p. 142.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] Marchese, n. 4. It is clear that Becchi's report is founded on hearsay.

took up his defence, to the great displeasure of the Pope. And either the Pope or one of the theologians declared that Fra Hieronymo was the cause of all the misfortunes of Piero (de' Medici). Becchi, having heard of this affair, has induced the Cardinals of Perugia and Segorbe (Lopez and Martino) and the Bishop of Capaccio (Podocatharus, a Greek), to dissuade the Pope from taking action in the matter. The Pope has been appeased, and will abstain from any hostile measure ;[1] but he has told Capaccio to inform the Ten, through Becchi, that "his Paternity ought to speak modestly of his Holiness, and the most reverend Cardinals and other prelates, and that he ought not to transgress the methods of other excellent and admirable preachers, nor to open his mouth on things which do not pertain to him or to his office, and accordingly that he should not meddle in secular matters and affairs of State."[2]

13th April; Becchi to the Ten.[3]—It would be well that they or the Signory should write a submissive letter to the Pope, declaring in particular that they have urged Fra Girolamo to obey his Holiness, and to speak with moderation ("modestamente") of him, of the College of Cardinals, of the Roman Court, and of Roman affairs in general.

It was a timely warning, as appears from a letter written two days later by Cardinal Ascanio Sforza to his brother the Duke of Milan (15th April).[4] He has told his Holiness of the Duke's suggestion that he should send to Florence a Vicar-General of the Franciscan Order ("de le Zoccole"), "per il suspecto hà de frate Hieronymo." The Pope has replied that if the Duke thinks it desirable he will write a Brief to Fra Hieronymo, summoning him to Rome, and will afterwards appoint a Vicar whom the Duke will approve (or choose? "chi piacerà a quella"). But the Brief was not written, for the next news from Florence relieved somewhat the tension of affairs.

16th April; The Signory to Becchi.[5]—Fra Girolamo has spoken with perfect respect ("molto costumatamente") of His Holiness, etc. They understand that he has now gone to Prato and Pistoia. It is entirely false that he has the city under his domination. He has never sought any such thing, and any information to this effect is a calumny.

23rd April; Becchi to the Ten.[6]—The Pope is well satisfied ("assai ben satisfacto") concerning the affairs of Fra Girolamo.

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[1] "In modo lo placò et dispose a volere soprasedere."

[2] Another letter from Becchi, of the same date, is given by Gherardi, p. 143. It contains nothing of importance.

[3] Gherardi, p. 143.

[4] Del Lungo, n. 7.

[5] Marchese, p. 172 (*note*) with the erroneous date (as pointed out by Gherardi) 16th April 1498.

[6] Gherardi, p. 144.

CHAPTER XI

PROPHET AND POPE (2)

WITH Savonarola's departure for Prato and Pistoia, in April 1496, there comes a lull in the correspondence with Rome on the subject of his preaching and prophecies, and the events of the succeeding months are more sparsely illustrated in the published documents. The Dominican Convent at Prato had been subjected, as has been seen, to that of S. Marco, with encouragement from the Signory of Florence and with the full concurrence of the General, in the January of this year.[1] Fra Antonio d'Olandia had been appointed Prior, and he had lost no time in inviting Savonarola to deliver a course of sermons in the church attached to the convent.[2] The event fully justified his expectations, for Fra Girolamo's brief stay at Prato produced very remarkable results. It was not merely that people flocked in from Florence and all the country round to hear him.[3] The professors of the Pisan "Studio" or University, then located at Prato by reason of the war with Pisa, attended his sermons, and he gained among them some distinguished adherents. Cinozzi relates how, after one of his sermons, Ulivieri, a canon of Florence, and a very learned man, openly exclaimed: "My scholars, and all of you, let us take our books and follow this man; and indeed we are hardly worthy to be his disciples."[4] But, more than this, the work of moral and political reform was seriously taken in hand. Gherardi has brought to light a list of subscriptions to a document which is

[1] The documents are given by Gherardi, pp. 74 *sqq.*, and have been summarised above in ch. vii.

[2] Gherardi, p. 84.

[3] "Fuvvi tanto popolo di Firenze e del contado che pioveva là ognuno" is the forcible and quaint expression of Landucci (*Diario*, 17th April).

[4] "Andiamo e portiamo e libri drieto a questo uomo, chè anche a pena ne siamo degni" (Cinozzi, p. 6). Burlamacchi, forgetful of this transference of the "Studio," takes Savonarola to Pisa (p. 75), about the last place he would have been likely to visit at this time.

itself unfortunately lost, but which must have contained some kind of *forma vivendi* which had its political as well as its religious side. The most explicit of the subscriptions run in the following or similar terms: "I, Michele Ghimenti, am content to live under a popular government (vivere appopolo), and to live well," *i.e.* in accordance with the dictates of religion. Such a mode of life, the last of the subscribers emphatically declares, is better for soul and body.[1] The necessity for such a reform, at least as regards conduct, had been urgently impressed upon the Podestà, or Governor, of Prato, in a letter despatched to him by the Florentine Signory on 17th January.[2]

To this period belongs a brief correspondence, published by Villari, between Fra Girolamo and his arch-enemy, Lodovico Sforza, which we here summarise:—

11*th April* 1496; Savonarola to Sforza.[3]—He is told that the Duke complains of his sermons; but this can only arise from his having been deceived by evil-disposed persons who have represented him as hostile to his Highness; whereas he loves both him and all the princes of Italy, nay, all mankind, and is ready to die for their salvation. "And because the grace of God has enlightened me concerning the ruin which He has prepared for Italy . . . I have invited and exhorted men to penance . . . warning them that there is no other remedy." But though Italy has heard his voice, there is no amendment, but matters are going from bad to worse; and God, instead of being appeased, is even more angry than before. "Wherefore, my lord, I admonish you that there is no other remedy for you, and I exhort your Highness to acknowledge your Saviour, and to do penance for your sins, for the scourge draws near." If he will repent, God will pardon him and give him prosperity, otherwise his affairs will go to ruin; "and the end will show that my advice has been wiser than any other which has been given you." The writer declares that he has spoken thus from no human motive and with no hope of reward. "Indeed, for these words of mine I expect no other return than disgrace . . . and persecution, and at last death, for which I look with an earnest desire . . . for 'to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.'"

In after years, during his long imprisonment at Loches, under Louis XII. of France, Sforza had ample leisure to meditate on the wise counsel which had been so fearlessly proffered him in the days of his prosperity; and, if we may trust the chronicler Filipepi, he

[1] "Vorrei si vivesse bene e massime appopolo, perchè sarà milgliore vivere e per l'anima e per il corpo" (Gherardi, pp. 87-91).

[2] He is to put down gambling, blasphemy, the habit of working on holy days and street-walking by night (Gherardi, p. 91).

[3] Villari and Casanova, pp. 441-42.

then at least had the grace to acknowledge the justice of Savonarola's words. It may be added that at about the same time Fra Girolamo addressed a letter in identical terms to Galeazzo della Mirandola, and possibly also to other Italian princes.[1]

12th April; Somenzi to Sforza.[2]—A covering letter to the above, wherein the Milanese envoy reports that Fra Girolamo is desirous to maintain friendly relations with his master. And considering that "el dicto Frate" has all the common folk under his control, it would perhaps be a good plan to give him assurances of good-will, to the end that he may bring over the city to a proper regard for his Highness. Your Highness, he suggests, will do well to assure him of your good dispositions towards the Florentine Republic, and your willingness to help them to recover Pisa, if only they will be tractable ("se da questo popolo non mancherà").

30th April; Sforza to Savonarola.[3]—The Duke takes it in good part that Fra Girolamo has written to him with frankness. He will not deny that he had disapproved of what had been reported to him, viz. that Savonarola had declared in the pulpit that he was not bound to obey His Holiness. It seems to him that every one, and more especially religious men, ought not merely to entertain in the mind the respect which is due to the Vicar of Christ, but also to speak of him with reverence. As for the Friar's exhortation to the princes of Italy to do penance, he for his part fears God no less, and is no less earnest in his endeavour to do his duty as a good Christian, than any religious man of his acquaintance ("non manco . . . ch'alcuno cha qual se vogli religioso sii"). As for sin, he is not conscious of any sin for which he ought to do penance. But if his correspondent will be so good as to tell him what penance he ought to perform, he will gladly undertake it.

The letter concludes with expressions of gratitude and esteem which were, perhaps, hardly likely to weigh much with the austere and zealous Prior of S. Marco.

25th April; Savonarola to Sforza.[4]—While thanking the Duke for his gracious letter, he assures him that he has never asserted unconditionally that obedience is not due to the Pope. As for his general exhortations to penance, he passes judgment on no one in particular. He is glad to hear that the Duke lives in the fear of God, and he can commend him to no better judge than his own conscience.

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[1] Villari and Casanova, *loc. cit.*, "Questa lettera . . . pare che sia un circolare." The letter to Mirandola is given by Marchese, p. 124. It bears no date, but was probably sent in March. A second letter, containing more explicit warnings of an impending calamity, is dated 26th March (Marchese, p. 125). The premature death of Galeazzo occurred within two years (Schnitzer, p. 569).

[2] Villari, i. Append. p. cxxxviii.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. cxxxvi.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. cxxxv.

We may add here that Somenzi's hopes of being able to win over Fra Girolamo to the side of the League were again revived about six months later. Needless to say, they proved altogether vain, as Tranchedino had predicted that they would.[1]

Already in May Savonarola was again in Florence, and from time to time, on Sundays and festivals, delivered his sermons on Ruth and Micheas. These discourses were hardly less calculated to arouse resentment in Rome than those of the Lenten course on Amos and Zacharias. The preacher is confident of his mission to all Italy. His pulpit is the centre whence the voice of warning must spread on every side.[2] And it is directed, in the first instance, to those who rule and govern the Church.[3] To Italy and to Rome he proclaims that "God will come forth from His place. He has waited so long that He can delay no longer." "I announce to you that God will unsheath His sword, and will send a foreign invader . . . and there will be so much bloodshed, so much cruelty, that you will say: 'O God, Thou hast come forth from Thy place.'"[4] God will come down, and will trample upon Italy and upon Rome; priests, bishops, cardinals, and "gran maestri" shall be trodden down.[5] Rome is bidden not to trust blindly to her possession of the relics of the Apostles, like those who in the days of Jeremiah comforted themselves with the vain assurance: "Templum Domini, templum Domini est."[6] It is not lawful *per se* for the laity to punish a bad priest. The matter must be laid before his ecclesiastical superior, bishop or archbishop, or the Pope himself. "But if they will not act, then you not only may but ought to expel him (cacciarlo), nor will you by so doing incur any excommunication for a breach of ecclesiastical immunity."[7] The liberty of Christ stands above ecclesiastical immunities. "But if

[1] Somenzi to Sforza, 7th and 13th November (Villari, i. Append. pp. cxxxviii. *sqq.*). Tranchedino, on the other hand, warns the Duke (28th October) that he must give up soft measures "cum quelli che hanno il pelo asinino," and assures him (9th November) that the Friar is not to be trusted; because, if he were to dissociate himself from the French faction, he would be ignominiously chased out of the city ("saria spaciato per pubblica bestia in Fiorenza"; del Lungo, nn. 17, 18).

[2] "Noi predichiamo a tutta l'Italia . . . e di qui si diffonde la voce per tutto" (Villari and Casanova, *Scelta*, p. 242).

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 243.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 246.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 247.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 248; Jer. vii. 4.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 250.

even Christ were to say that a bad priest must not be cast forth, then you would say that Christ Himself was wicked; *sed hoc absit.*"[1] Rome is the very fount and origin of sin; the queen of all wickedness; the queen of pride, of luxury, and of every vice, the source and cause of the sins of other priests and of other Christians.[2]

It may be readily conceded that not a word of the preacher's bitter reproaches went beyond the facts of the case. When some one, half a century ago, reproached the then editor of *The Tablet* with having published a report of some proceedings which was, he said, "scandalously false," the editor defended himself by assuring his correspondent that unfortunately the report in question was "scandalously true." And so with perfect justice might Savonarola have said of the invectives scattered through these sermons. Whether it was prudent, whether, after the warnings addressed to him, it was right to proclaim in these particular truths from the pulpit, *coram populo Florentino*, is a point which may be left to the judgment of the reader. Provocative however as his language was during this summer season, the irritation was at least less continuous than it had been during Lent, and it seems probable that to this period must be referred the attempt made by Alexander to win over the Friar by the offer of a Cardinal's hat. This incident has been regarded as affording evidence of the Pope's extraordinary inconsistency. To us it does not appear altogether in this light. There can be no doubt that Alexander, notwithstanding his own vices, appreciated the zeal of the Friar, and regarded him as an earnest but misguided man. To save such a man from the evil consequences of his own obstinacy was an end worthy of being achieved; and the offer of preferment was in itself, if we abstract from the selfishness of the motive, a very legitimate means for the attainment of the end. But the offer was rejected with scorn. The preacher wished for no other kind of red hat than the crown of martyrdom, and so, with characteristic vehemence, he told the people.[3]

[1] "Così ancora se Cristo ci rispondesse che non volesse che lo cacciassimo, tu diresti Cristo cattivo; *sed hoc absit*, che non si può dire" (*ibid.*, p. 251).

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 252.

[3] "Io non voglio cappelli, non mitre grandi nè piccole; non voglio se non quello che tu hai dato ai tuoi santi, la morte; un cappello rosso, un cappello di sangue; questo desidero" (S. 19 on Ruth, etc., 20th August 1496; Villari, i. 419). The fact of the offer is mentioned by Burlamacchi (p. 85), but without any specification of the date. The contemporary chronicler, Parenti, places the incident, which, however, he gives only as a matter of common report, in May, 1496 (Schnitzer, p. 645). The Papal messenger was believed by some to have

Meanwhile the temporal condition of Florence was, in many respects, going from bad to worse. Perpetual rains had destroyed the harvest;[1] the war with Pisa had drained the exchequer;[2] sickness was rife among the population,[3] and the hopes which had been placed in the French King were again and again deluded.[4] It was obviously ungrateful, as well as unjust, to throw the blame of these disasters on Fra Girolamo, but it is plain that his influence was seriously threatened. His sermon on 20th August, preached in the recently completed Hall of the Great Council, on the invitation of the Signory, is a kind of *apologia pro vita sua*. He took for his text the words: "Domine quid multiplicati sunt qui tribulant me?"

He is accused [he says] of having brought about the ruin of the city ("tu di' che io ho guasto la città"). But how? He has urged the appointment of the Great Council, the appeal against the sentence of the *sei fave*, the abolition of the Parlamento. Are these things a matter of complaint? Of this he is certain, that under any other kind of government everything would have gone to rack and ruin ("voi andavate a sangue e fuoco e fiamme"), for the factions which are rife in the city, and which are the evil inheritance of an evil past, are full of rancour and of vengeful intentions. If the citizens had followed his advice they would not now be suffering tribulation. It is complained that he has made the city's laws. But if they are good laws what ground for complaint can there be? He is accused of having opposed the League. He has said nothing at all about the League. But he has spoken of "Lilies and Lilies."[5] They have misunderstood him. He has indeed written to the King of France, but only to warn him of what would befall him if he should fail in his duty. And as to the famine, the poor assuredly have little cause to complain of him, for he has spared no pains to collect alms for their relief.[6]

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been no other than Cæsar Borgia (!), the Pope's own son. Burlamacchi, on the other hand, tells us that the offer was made through a Dominican friar, to whom Savonarola replied that if he would come to his next sermon he should have his answer. If this was so, it would seem that the proposal must have been made shortly before 20th August. It is just possible that the whole story has grown out of Fra Girolamo's own words above quoted, and that they, in their turn, rested on a less substantial foundation than an official proffer of the hat.

[1] Landucci, *Diario*, 4th and 18th May, 6th June, 20th and 22nd August, 19th September.

[2] Tranchedino and Somenzi to Sforza, 8th June, 20th and 22nd July (del Lungo, nn. 8-10); Landucci, 23rd July, 4th August.

[3] Landucci, 28th May, 25th June, 8th July.

[4] *Ibid.*, 2nd and 3rd May ("fu da beffe"—"he has been making game of us"), and 24th.

[5] *Cf. supra*, p. 62.

[6] S. 19 on Ruth, etc. (Villari and Casanova, pp. 253, *sqq.*).

A few days later, on 28th August, the Friar was the victim of a nefarious plot. A forged letter, alleged to have been written by him to Charles VIII., was intercepted by the emissaries of Sforza, and, notwithstanding all his protests, the affair involved him in a serious misunderstanding with the French ambassador.[1]

In October the Emperor Maximilian, who had already sent an ambassador to Florence to induce the Signory to join the League, but in vain, himself appeared in Italy, and betook himself to Pisa, whence he threatened all kinds of hostile measures.[2] At this juncture, on 28th October, by the special invitation of the Signory, Fra Girolamo once more raised his voice to inspire his fellow-citizens with confidence, and to dissuade them from allowing themselves to be frightened into any constitutional change. Somenzi declares that on this occasion he exhorted them to stand firm to their alliance with the French king, whom, however, he did not mention by name.[3] But the actual words of the Friar—if the lengthy extracts given by Villari and Casanova fairly represent the contents of the sermon—can hardly be said to bear out the report of the Milanese envoy.

He reminds his hearers that they have again and again been delivered, by the mercy of God, and through his own instrumentality, from impending evils. He reminds them of the revolution effected without bloodshed just two years previously, of his own mediation with Charles VIII. on behalf of the republic, and of other divine favours which he will not mention in detail. And now, what has been the gratitude of the people? Those who had lived in exile, and who have been allowed to return to the city, are now plotting her ruin (*i.e.* the Arrabbiati). Men who have had the rope round their necks (the Palleschi), and have benefited by the amnesty, are now conspiring on their own account. And lastly, the magistrates who

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[1] Somenzi to Sforza, 28th August, 2nd, 3rd, 8th September; Tranchedino, 16th September (del Lungo, nn. 11-14); Landucci, 2nd September ("Lo'nbasciadore di Francia andò sù alla Signoria a dire che questo Frate era quello che guastava Firenze. El povero Frate aveva tanti nimici!"). Manfredi's letter to d'Este, referring apparently to the same incident, but dated 28th May (Cappelli, n. 100) has surely been misplaced. The date should be 28th August.

[2] Landucci, 19th and 22nd August (the embassy); 14th October (the Emperor has left Genoa for Pisa); 24th October (he has arrived at Pisa, and threatens to ravage the country).

[3] "El Frate ha predicato in questa mattina et ha dicto mirabilia. Sopratucto exhortò questo populo ad volere star saldo alla fede, cioè del Rè di Franza (licet ch' el non la dica), et ha affirmato che tutto quello ha predicto de le cose future sarà vero senza mancho; ciò è che tucta Italia ha a ruinare, excepto Fiorentini se stano saldi," etc. (Somenzi to Sforza, 28th October; Del Lungo, n. 16).

have been elected under the new constitution have neglected their duty, and have been afraid to punish crime. Profane language, gambling, and the worst kind of vice are still rife in the city. "It is these things which are the cause of our tribulations. The good things which I have predicted for Florence will come, but the wicked will have their hell in this world and the next. You err by putting your trust in men, and in always looking for help from that king who never comes, and who has already been punished as we predicted. If only you will return to God, and will stand united, I promise you that you shall put your enemies to flight. Nay, I would myself be the first to go forth against them with the crucifix in my hand, and we will chase our enemies as far as Pisa and beyond."[1]

This remarkable sermon was followed two days later by the welcome news of the safe arrival of certain ships from Marseilles laden with corn. The bearer of these glad tidings arrived at the very moment when a solemn procession, accompanying the statue of the Madonna dell' Impruneta was entering the city; and the scene of wild excitement which ensued has been immortalised by the author of *Romola*.[2] The relief, indeed, was remarkable rather for its opportuneness than for its magnitude. For months afterwards the diary of Landucci bears witness to a steady rise in the price of corn, and to an increasing number of deaths from famine.[3] But for the moment, at least, the scales of popular favour were once more decidedly turned in favour of Fra Girolamo.[4]

Within a fortnight, however, of the arrival of the corn ships a fresh blow fell upon him. This was the Brief, *Reformationi et augmento*, dated 7th November, which, though it was not addressed to him personally, and though it contains no allusion to his affairs, nevertheless profoundly affected him, and proved to be the very turning-point which separates the earlier from the later stages of his conflict with the Pope. The following is the substance of the Brief:—

"Desirous as we are that salutary measures should be taken for the welfare of the Order of Preachers, it has seemed well that the convents of

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[1] The sermon is given partly in Villari, i. 484 *sqq.*, partly in Villari and Casanova, *Scelta*, etc., pp. 258 *sqq.*

[2] *Romola*, ch. xliii.; Landucci 30th October; Filipepi, *Cronaca*, in Villari and Casanova, p. 465. "Videsi chiaramente el miracolo espresso," says Landucci.

[3] Landucci, 30th November; 20th and 25th January 1497; 20th and 28th February; 19th and 27th March; 8th and 12th April; 18th and 27th May; 1st and 13th June. After this date the prices decrease steadily; but the plague continues to ravage the city.

[4] Villari, i. 487.

S. Maria della Quercia, near Viterbo, Santo Spirito at Siena, S. Caterina at Pisa, S. Sabina in Rome, and S. Domenico at San Gimignano, which have hitherto been united to the Congregation of Lombardy, should be separated therefrom, and that together with the houses of S. Maria sopra Minerva in Rome, S. Maria at Viterbo, S. Domenico at Perugia, S. Domenico at Cortona, S. Agostino at Montepulciano, S. Marco at Florence, S. Domenico at Fiesole, S. Maria del Sasso (near Bibbiena), S. Domenico at Prato, S. Romano at Lucca, and S. Domenico at Pistoia, they should be formed into a new Congregation of the stricter observance, to be called the Congregation of the Roman and Tuscan Province.[1] Accordingly, we hereby separate the convents first above named from the Lombard Congregation, and unite them to those other convents afterwards enumerated, and we erect and establish a new Congregation of the stricter observance to be designated as has been said.

"And we hereby appoint our venerable Brother Olivieri Cardinal Caraffa as Vicar-General of the said Congregation for the space of two years, after the expiration of which time he shall cease to hold this office; and every two years a new vicar shall be elected by the chapter of the Congregation; and no vicar shall be confirmed in his office, or re-elected thereto, unless after an interval of two years from the termination of his former holding of the same.

"All members of the houses pertaining to the new Congregation who may now be absent therefrom, must forthwith return. The new Congregation is to enjoy all the rights and privileges heretofore and now enjoyed by the Congregation of Lombardy. *Ceteris contrariis quibuscumque nonobstantibus.*"[2]

The Brief is addressed to the brethren of the several convents named in it, and among them, as will have been observed, that of S. Marco at Florence by no means holds the first place. It is, indeed, probable that one of the motives which prompted the issue of this new ordinance was the desire to deprive Fra Girolamo of the comparative independence which he enjoyed as Vicar-General of the reformed Congregation of S. Marco; but it does not therefore follow that the Brief deserved to be spoken of in such terms as the following:—

"Afterwards there came a Brief prescribing that all the convents of Tuscany (*i.e.* all the observantine convents) should be united in one Congregation, into which S. Marco, with the convents attached to it,

[1] The term Congregation, it will be remembered, was employed to designate a group of houses of the stricter observance. The idea seems to have been to make the Congregations conterminous with the Provinces of the Order. The convents of Tuscany were included in the Roman province.

[2] Villari, i. Append. pp. cxlii. *sqq.*

should also enter. In the earlier Brief, the Pope had wished us to enter the Congregation of Lombardy, from which he had himself separated us ; and now they want us to enter that of Tuscany ; now here and now there. This seems to me like a game of chess, when one defends the king. When he is hard pressed he moves from one square to another, and then back again."[1]

This is perhaps hardly fair criticism. After Alexander VI. had ordered the reunion of S. Marco with the Lombard Congregation, he had so far yielded to the representations of Fra Girolamo as tacitly to withdraw the command. Meanwhile, Savonarola had resumed with renewed vigour the course of action of which the Pope had complained. Yet the Pope does not revive the ordinance against which Savonarola had protested, but makes a new provision, far less unfavourable to the Friar, and, as we shall presently see, far more in accordance with the Friar's own principles. The Brief *Reformationi et augmento* was drawn, as it would seem, with the full concurrence of the General, Torriano, who had never shown any kind of hostility to Savonarola ; and the newly-erected Congregation was placed—for the first two years of its existence—under the government of Cardinal Caraffa, hitherto Fra Girolamo's firm supporter. But more than this. In their original petition for the separation of S. Marco from the Lombard Congregation, Savonarola and his brethren had appealed to the principle that the natural divisions of provinces ought, in accordance with the constitutions, to be maintained in the Dominican Order. And it had been part of Fra Girolamo's scheme to extend his reform not merely to Fiesole, Prato, and Sasso, but also to Pisa, Siena, San Gimignano, and probably in course of time to Lucca, Perugia, and perhaps even to Viterbo and to Rome itself. But the scheme had not, as has been seen, proved uniformly successful. At Pisa and Siena it had failed disastrously. At San Gimignano it had been dropped almost before it was seriously taken up. And probably one of the main causes of failure had been the element of political diplomacy which had been one of its

[1] S. 1 on Exodus, 11th February 1498. Villari writes, with reference to the Brief: "Una volta sottoposto il Savonarola all' autorità del nuovo vicario, che dipendeva sempre dal generale dell' Ordine in Roma"—as if Savonarola himself had not been subject to the same authority—"*egli avrebbe perduta quella independenza, per cui tanto aveva bramata la separazione dai frati lombardi ; quell' imperio sopra i suoi, che gli dava tanta autorità in Firenze*," etc. (i. 492). A desire for independence, such as Villari here ascribes to Savonarola, is not usually esteemed one of the characteristic virtues of the religious life.

principal supports. Yet if it was, as Savonarola had urged, an anomaly that S. Marco should be united to Lombardy, surely it was still more anomalous that half the observantine convents of Tuscany should be separated from, while the other half still remained united to, the Lombard Congregation. And it can hardly be a matter for surprise that the superiors and the Cardinal Protector of the Order should now take the matter up, and enter upon a serious effort to combine unity of government, and a comparative simplicity of organisation, with internal reform. At any rate, in the only three documents bearing on the actual execution of the Brief by Torriano, there is not a trace of hostility to Savonarola, but rather the contrary. In a letter dated 18th November 1496, Torriano appoints Fra Giacomo di Sicilia, a man entirely friendly to Fra Girolamo, to undertake the carrying out of the reform. In a second letter, of 24th November, he appoints new superiors at Siena, Pisa, San Gimignano and la Quercia but not at S. Marco or Fiesole or Prato, and confirms Fra Giacomo in the office of Vicar of the Congregation. In a third letter, of 12th December, he ordains that Fra Giacomo "at the request of Fra Girolamo da Ferrara" (*i.e.* Savonarola) is to send some of the community of S. Marco to San Gimignano and la Quercia, and is to dismiss those of the brethren now resident there whom Fra Girolamo would wish to be rid of.

However, notwithstanding these friendly measures, the scheme of union found no favour with the community of S. Marco, and shortly after the receipt of the Brief they despatched a letter of remonstrance to the Pope. This document does not seem to have been preserved, but it is evident that it received no favourable answer, and a few months later, presumably in April 1497, they put forth a public manifesto, under the title of *Apologeticum Fratrum S. Marci*, with a preface by Savonarola himself, the substance of which must now be given :—

"Three reproaches [writes Savonarola] have been made against me, viz. (1) that I have taught false doctrine (perversum dogma); (2) that I refused to obey when cited to Rome; (3) that I have not obeyed the Papal precept as to the union of S. Marco with the new Congregation.

"To the first I have already replied, and my orthodoxy will more fully appear from my work on *The Triumph of the Cross*, which will shortly see the light.

"To the second I reply that I received from the Pope not a citation, but a kind invitation, with which it would be my greatest joy to comply if I

could. But I cannot without risking my life, and this every one knows that I am not bound to do.

"As to the third accusation, it really hardly concerns me, for the submission to the union does not lie with me alone but with my brethren. They number about 250; they are for the most part men distinguished by position, prudence, and learning; they act under no compulsion from me, who am, moreover, a stranger (*i.e.* not a Florentine) in their midst. They then unanimously protested, in a letter to the Pope, against the proposed union, and declared that they were ready to suffer anything rather than consent to it. Their reasons will be here subjoined; and whereas I know well that this will give great displeasure to certain religious, let them remember that they have only themselves to thank. So long as we could we kept the matter quiet. But now that they have persistently repeated their accusations, it is our duty for the sake of peace, of religion, and of justice, to defend ourselves."

So far Savonarola's preface. The *Apologeticum* proper now follows. It falls naturally into three parts, viz. (1) a statement of the reasons alleged in favour of the union; (2) the reasons against the union; (3) the answer to the reasons alleged in the first part. It must be sufficient here to indicate the several points of the argument with the utmost brevity.

I. It is proposed to effect an union between the reformed Congregation of S. Marco and the other observantine convents of Tuscany, under a single vicar, who is to make use of the brethren of S. Marco in order by their means to reform the other houses. The question is raised whether a precept to this effect is reasonable. Its upholders urge the following considerations as establishing the duty of obedience:—

1. The object proposed is good.

2. It is more in accordance with right order that there should be only one vicar over the reformed Tuscan houses.

3. Tuscan convents which desire to be reformed will not now be obliged to attach themselves to another province.

4. If all wish for the reform it is unreasonable for S. Marco to stand aloof.

5. Superiors prescribe the union. They ought to be obeyed.

6. He who can help his neighbours without inconvenience to himself ought to do so.

II. In weighing the considerations which militate against the union, it must be remembered that such reasons ought to be sufficient as answer to the nature of the matter; *i.e.* probable reasons which appeal to ordinary human prudence. For no one can rightly judge of such a matter as that of the reform of an Order unless he has practical knowledge of it. This we claim to have. We know what has been done at S. Marco. We know what goes on in other convents. Humanly

speaking the reform of these convents is impossible. We are to consider not what God actually can do, if He should choose to work a miracle, but rather what He is wont to do, and what we can do in accordance with what holy men have written on such matters. Here, then, are our principal reasons :—

1. To reform anything is to restore its original form. Now, the "forma" of the religious life is charity. Without a renovation of charity an external reformation is to no purpose. But an interior reformation can be effected only by men of consummate virtue. Of such men, however, there is evidently a dearth. How, then, is the reform to be carried out? Do they affirm that all the religious of S. Marco are perfect men? If a little leaven corrupts a great mass, how much more sure will be the corruption of a few good men mingled with many bad? Or will they send the best men from S. Marco to govern other convents? The answer is, that our best men are needed for the convents which we have, so great is the concourse of young men to our Congregation. Or if it be said that in the other convents there are already men fit to govern under the new reform, we answer: Where are they? How have they lain concealed all these years?

2. It is a maxim of the spiritual life that whereas worldly men and sinners are often converted, lax religious are never, or hardly ever, brought back to fervour.

3. A reform requires subjects well disposed, and suitable agents. Both are here wanting.

4. The means should be adapted to the end in view. This is not the case here. This subversive measure will drive many young men from our convents back into the world, and will hinder others from entering.

5. The servants of God ought to be wiser in their generation than the children of this world. But men of the world don't enter into partnership with bankrupts.

6. Contraries cannot be expected to agree. But as nothing is better than a good religious, so nothing is worse than a bad one. How absurd, then, to join them.

7. It is useless to join to what is already good that which can profit nothing and may do harm.

8. Experience shows that the separation has had good results.

9. Holy men have always brought about reforms by separating the fervent from the tepid.

10. A little spark will set on fire a great wood; a single bad apple will infect a whole layer.

11. The good estate of a religious Order depends on its government. Under the new scheme there can be no good government. The Sienese, and more particularly the Pisans, hate the Florentines.

12. The vicar will be either a bad man, or a mediocrity, or a man of high virtue. If he be a bad man all will go amiss. If he be a mediocrity, "sub specie boni confundet omnia," by trying to please both parties. If

he is a holy man he will certainly separate the fervent from the lax, and so will re-establish the separation.

III. It only remains for us to reply to the reasons alleged in favour of the union :—

(1). "Bonum ex integra causa." The excellence of the end in view does not prove that the proposed means are reasonable.

2. The plea of unity would equally avail for bringing the Conventuals into line with the Observantines.

3. While the reformed convents have their own vicar there is no need to have recourse to another province (*i.e.* any convent really desirous of reform can seek union with S. Marco).

4. The irregulars are not a true part of the Order of Preachers. It is better to cut them off.

5. We are not obliged to obey in all things.

6. The brethren of S. Marco could do no good, and would take much narm, in and from the proposed union.

We give, in conclusion, the last words of the second and principal portion of the document. The brethren write :—

"This union, therefore, is impossible, unreasonable, mischievous, and the brethren of S. Marco cannot be bound to accept it ; for superiors cannot command what is contrary to the constitutions of the Order, and contrary to charity and the good of souls. We must, therefore, suppose that they have been deceived by false information, and it is our duty to resist, in the meanwhile, a command which is contrary to charity. Nor must we allow ourselves to be frightened by threats or excommunications, but rather expose ourselves to death than submit to that which would be for the poison and ruin of souls. When conscience rebels against a command received from a superior, we must first resist and humbly correct him, which we have already done ; but if this is not enough, then we must act like S. Paul, who, in the presence of all, withstood Peter to his face."

The reader who has had the patience to peruse our analysis of the *Apologeticum Fratrum S. Marci* will probably be ready to admit that, while the manifesto embodies much shrewd good sense, it also contains not a little special pleading. Of course, on the supposition that the union would be carried out in an unreasonable way, it was easy to demonstrate that the scheme was itself unreasonable. But in fact the first steps actually taken were precisely such as Savonarola had himself contemplated at the outset of his own reform ; and the plea that a union between S. Marco and the convents at Pisa and Siena would prove disastrous comes with a bad grace from the very house which had sought to bring those convents within its own jurisdiction.

We do not pretend to be ourselves convinced of the wisdom of the scheme promoted by Caraffa and Torriano, and embodied in the Brief *Reformationi et augmento.* We only urge that the case for S. Marco, as against not merely the Pope but also the superiors of the Order, was not so evidently and plainly good as to justify obstinate resistance.

And as regards the bearing of the Brief upon Savonarola personally, instead of enlarging—as Villari and others have done—on the sinister designs which are supposed to have actuated Alexander VI. in its preparation and promulgation, it would be more to the purpose to consider how a truly zealous Pope would have been likely to act under the circumstances; and it is difficult to imagine what plan could have been devised whereby Fra Girolamo—unless he was to be allowed to proceed unchecked—could have been more considerately treated. Persuaded, rightly or wrongly, of his special mission to foretell the future, and to scourge the vices of Roman prelates, he had disregarded alike admonitions and overtures, and had declared in advance that any Papal censure upon him, except on conditions defined by himself, would be invalid. This was hardly a state of things which could be allowed to pass unnoticed, and it is clear that even some of Fra Girolamo's friends thought that he had gone too far. The Friar's excuses for not going to Rome (though he could visit Prato and Pistoia), and his objections to the union of his convent with the Congregation of Lombardy, had been tacitly accepted. Yet something must be done in the interests of ecclesiastical discipline. What could be better than to place Fra Girolamo under the immediate control of his friend Caraffa? We do not pretend to suppose that Alexander VI. reasoned precisely after this fashion. But as a man may act in a manner that is objectively wrong from a good motive, so also motives that are very mixed, or even vicious, may take effect in a command that is objectively just. In such a case the duty of obedience, if the command be insisted on, is plain. On no other principle, we are convinced, can a sound judgment be passed upon the conduct of Fra Girolamo. And we are equally convinced that the principle was as clearly recognized in the fifteenth century as it has been in post-Tridentine days.

That Savonarola and his brethren should have respectfully submitted to the Pope their objections to the ordinance concerning the newly-constituted Congregation, as had already been done in the case

of the order for reunion with the convents of Lombardy, is no matter for surprise or for condemnation. But when the Pope, notwithstanding the reasons alleged, persevered in his determination, the only reasonable course, objectively, was to submit.

Professor Schnitzer indeed is at pains to show, by numerous references to the Canon Law and to the works of eminent canonists, that the Pope could not lawfully or validly command any one to exchange a stricter for a less strict Order or observance.[1] Passages, however, which show that a dispensation issued to an individual to pass from a stricter to a less strict observance is invalid if based on inadequate reasons, are not to the present purpose. But we cannot here enter into a discussion on a point of Canon Law, and instead of examining one by one the authorities which Dr Schnitzer has collected, or referred to, we will rather appeal to what is in some respects a parallel instance. Dr Schnitzer would presumably acknowledge the validity of the Brief *Dominus ac Redemptor*, whereby the Society of Jesus was suppressed, and its members secularised, by Clement XIV. Here was an instance in which the members of an approved religious Order were, for the good of the Church as it appeared to the Pope, not merely reduced to a less strict observance, but entirely disbanded, and deprived of the status of "religious." Dr Schnitzer reminds us that the state of discipline in the convents of Tuscany which had not embraced the reform of S. Marco was deplorably lax;[2] but we shall hardly be expected to believe that men like Caraffa and Torriano were upholders of laxity. The erection of the Romano-Tuscan Congregation was part of a general scheme of reform which Caraffa seriously took in hand, and Alexander himself subsequently explained that it was not his intention that individual religious should be arbitrarily transferred from S. Marco to other convents of the Order.[3] When Villari urges that the real motive of the Brief of union was to facilitate the removal of Savonarola from Florence, he appears to forget that no attempt was actually made to depose Fra Girolamo from his office of Prior, still less to remove him to another convent. It would at least have been possible to send him as far as Prato if this had been desired. But whether or no the reasons for the act of union were in themselves good and sufficient, it must be admitted that the attitude of

[1] Schnitzer, pp. 790 *sqq*.

[2] Pico della Mirandola, in his Apology for Savonarola, speaks of them as "dens of thieves" (Schnitzer, *loc. cit.*).

[3] Schnitzer, p. 792.

Savonarola in the *Apologeticum* is that of one who no longer humbly submits his objections to the judgment of the Pope, but simply takes for granted the justice of his cause. He would, indeed, prefer that this were recognised, but he is quite ready to defend to the last extremity the position which he has taken up. And with every allowance for personal good faith we cannot pretend to think that such an attitude is objectively defensible.

Firm in his conviction that he was right, and that the Pope was deceived, Savonarola continued his preaching during the Advent of 1496. The first eight sermons on Ezechiel, which belong to this period, do not seem to have been so markedly characterised by invectives against the abuses of the Roman court and of the clergy at large as some of his earlier and later discourses. But they show abundant evidence of his anxiety about the political well-being of the city. The Consiglio Grande has been opening its doors too widely, and many evil-disposed persons have found a place therein. The Signory must lop and prune ("bisogna andarlo limando e racconciando"); the Consiglio must still be kept open to a large number of citizens, but the enemies of their country must be excluded. Nor must those be listened to who would have the appointments to the magistracies determined by lot.[1] Measures must be taken to check the license of those political gatherings ("conventicoli") at which men fare sumptuously, and speak ill of the constitution. The upshot of all their talk is abuse of "the Friar"; the name of "the Friar" is as sauce to all their food, and gives a flavour to their wine ("quivi si mangia pane e Frate, carne e Frate, vino e Frate"). This poor Friar stands alone against all the world.

"Come now; as far as I am concerned I say to you: Call doctors, call prelates, call whom you will, I am ready to contend with them all. The Signory must act with vigour; they must take the sword in hand; if need be they must call the people to arms. Magistrates who do not punish crime should be made to pay the penalty of the crimes which they allow to pass with impunity. Justice, then, O magnificent Signory; justice, my Lords of the Eight: justice, ye magistrates of Florence . . . let every one cry: Justice."[2]

[1] By voting against every name proposed, the enemies of the *Consiglio* had endeavoured to nullify or stultify the appointments to public offices. Many, disappointed at finding themselves never elected, urged a more extended use of the sortilege. These manœuvres are described in detail by Guicciardini, *Storia Fiorentina*, pp. 153 *sqq*.

[2] Sermons on Ezechiel, Villari, i. 498-99.

The official despatches bearing on the affairs of Savonarola during the closing months of 1496 are comparatively few in number. Three of them, in which Somenzi (7th and 13th November) expresses his hopes of winning over Fra Girolamo to the cause of the League, and in which Tranchedino (9th November) declares that the Friar is bound hand and foot to the French alliance, have already been mentioned in advance in the foregoing chapter.[1] On 11th November, the Duke of Ferrara writes to Manfredi, begging him to warn Fra Girolamo not to allow himself to be compromised by his communications with a certain "friend" (*i.e.* an emissary of Charles VIII.) with whom, he understands, that he has had a long interview. Such negotiations are full of pitfalls, and it behoves him to be wary.[2]

On 13th November, Tranchedino writes to Sforza that he has heard from a certain Florentine, of the Medicean party, that the city was on the point of going over to the League, but for the help recently sent by Charles VIII. to Leghorn. However, if the League will act with vigour (says his informant) the designs of these Frateschi —*i.e.* the popular party—will come to nothing. The letter is no better than a piece of diplomatic gossip, but it derives just a particle of interest from the events of the next few weeks.

On 17th November, the allies, and in particular the Emperor, met with some reverses off Leghorn, and the Emperor fled ignominiously.[3] And on the 30th some additional help given by the French king still further raised the spirits of the Florentines.[4] As the year drew to its close the Frateschi were decidedly in the ascendant, and Francesco Valori, the most vigorous though not always the most prudent of Savonarola's supporters, was elected Gonfaloniere for January and February 1497.[5]

Unfortunately for the success of Fra Girolamo's measures of political and social reform, Valori signalised his term of office by a marked disregard of certain of the Friar's warnings. It was precisely

[1] Villari, i. Append. pp. cxxxix. *sqq.*; del Lungo, n. 18.

[2] "Havemo veduto quanto ne significati de quello amico che è stato in cusì lungo ragionamento cum el ven. frate Hieronymo nostro, del che avemo facto qualche iuditio . . . che l'habii bona advertentia acciò non sia circumvenuto," etc. (Cappelli, n. 105).

[3] "Lo' Nperadore perdette la sua nave e pressochè la vita. Veduto tale segno e miracolo (!), l'aiuto di Dio a' Fiorentini, immediato s'andò con Dio e lasciò tale impresa" (Landucci, 17th November). On 21st and 27th November he speaks again of the Emperor's precipitate flight.

[4] Landucci, 30th November.

[5] Villari, i. 499 *sqq.*

at this time that the age for admission into the Consiglio Grande was lowered from thirty to twenty-four, a measure which gave a considerable increase of power to the young bloods of the city. These youths, it need hardly be said, were the most pronounced enemies of the severe censorship of morals which had been set up by Savonarola, and which had never been more effectively exercised than it was at the Carnival of 1497.[1]

Moreover, in the meanwhile the hopes which had been placed in Charles VIII. had once more evaporated; and this circumstance, together with a certain reaction of feeling against the stringency of the new regulations for the Carnival, once more diminished somewhat the prestige of Fra Girolamo. The Gonfaloniere elected for March and April was Bernardo del Nero, the most highly respected among the friends of the Medici family. He had, indeed, no sympathy with the mad freaks of Piero,[2] but he was assuredly no adherent of Savonarola. The Ten, however, did not go out of office with the Signory, and it may possibly have been the consciousness that the latter were less favourable to the Friar than heretofore which stimulated them to so considerable a degree of activity in pleading his cause at Rome, as it will appear from some of the following letters that they now showed.

25*th February* 1497; Manfredi to d'Este.[3]—We understand that the new Gonfaloniere and Signory are not favourable to the Friar, so that it is feared that his authority will wane. He has been preaching against the French King, saying that he will suffer for not having carried out the work entrusted to him by God. The city is suffering from great scarcity, and the country people are flocking in, and crying for bread.

26*th February;* Somenzi to Sforza.[4]—It is believed that the Friar and his faction will fare ill ("sarà messo al fondo"). He has been preaching against the French King, etc. (as in Manfredi's letter, *supra*). Whereby it is easily seen that the Friar has been preaching in accordance with the wishes of the government (*i.e.* that of Valori), and not by divine inspiration, and so it is thought that he will lose his reputation, and that all will go according to your Highness's wishes.

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[1] Villari, i. 500 *sqq.* It was on this occasion that the first "bonfire of vanities" was held.

[2] Villari, ii. 13, 14.

[3] Cappelli, n. 96, where, however, it is misdated 5th February 1496. We have already corrected the year. But it is clear that the day of the month also is wrongly given. Compare the following letter from Somenzi.

[4] Villari, ii. Append. p. xxv.

5th March; Somenzi to Sforza.[1]—Ercole d'Este has visited Florence in disguise in order, as is thought, to hear Fra Girolamo preach.[2]

7th March; Manfredi to d'Este.[3]—He has consulted Savonarola on the subject of his master's relations with France. Fra Girolamo fears that the King will not again come into Italy. These things are in the hands of God, though human means must also be used. Manfredi, apparently on the strength of this conversation, suggests that it would be well for his Highness to send a confidential envoy ("qualche persona religiosa, ma saputa") to the King, to stir him up. The new Gonfaloniere (del Nero) seems to wish to change the form of government. The city is in a state of greater disunion than ever, and disorder is feared.[4] The Friar is doing his best to resist him (or to preserve the peace? "ad obviarlo"), but his adversaries are many and powerful, and are asserting themselves more and more, and speaking with as great license as can be imagined (in un parlare tanto licentioso che non potria essere peggio). Nevertheless, the Friar does not cease to speak with courage (animosamente) against all evil livers, and against all who seek to ruin the Consiglio, which he declares to be the work of God. He has a great hearing.

7th March; Savonarola to d'Este.[5] (This is the confidential communication, containing that "secret of the Lord" which d'Este's faith has merited that he should learn, and of which something was said in a former chapter.)—D'Este will do well to send a trusty person to the French King in the hopes of opening his eyes (to the duty of once more invading Italy). But at the same time, and this the writer adds on his own account, it would be well to practise some finesse ("usare qualche astutia") with the enemy in order to avoid danger.[6]

7th March 1497; Becchi to the Ten.[7]—Piero and the Cardinal de' Medici rejoice to hear that cries of "Palle! Palle!" have been heard in Florence, and they hope to return within two months. (It was, of course, the election of del Nero as Gonfaloniere which raised these hopes.)[8] A certain Fra Santi, a Dominican from Florence, is said to have come with a message from Savonarola to Piero (!). All sorts of lies are in circulation.

About this time an additional envoy, Ser Alessandro Bracci, a

[1] Villari, ii. 6 (a fragment only).

[2] But this must surely be a *canard*. Only two days later we find Savonarola writing to d'Este.

[3] Cappelli, n. 107.

[4] Many indications, however, scattered through his letter, suggest that Manfredi was of a nervous temperament. He had no experience at home of popular government.

[5] Cappelli, n. 108.

[6] *See* above, p. 136.

[7] Gherardi, p. 146.

[8] Landucci speaks of the Medicean cry as having been raised (again) on 21st March, but adds: "E no' ne fu nulla" ("it all came to nothing").

more considerable personage than Ricciardo Becchi, was sent by the Signory to Rome on a special mission concerning the affair of Pisa. He was also charged to urge the cause of Fra Girolamo.[1] His letters now alternate with those of his junior colleague.

14*th March;* Bracci to the Ten.[2]—Reports a long conversation with the Pope. His Holiness began by lamenting the evils which had followed from the French invasion, of which evils Florence has had its share in the loss of Pisa. If only the Florentines will be "good Italians," and join the League, they shall have Pisa again. Bracci replied that they had always been good Italians. Their alliance with France was defensive, not offensive, etc. The Pope replied with rough humour that the Signory had sent a stout ambassador with a thin commission ("Domine Secretari, voi siete grasso come noi, ma, perdonateci, voi sete venuto con una magra commissione"). If he had nothing better to say he might return whence he came. "Your Signory," said the Pope, "deals only in fine words. But we say: 'Si nolueritis benedictionem elongabitur a vobis.' We will not have the French in Italy, and you by your obstinacy are working your own ruin." In vain Bracci urged that the city was never more united or enjoyed greater internal peace.[3] The Pope persevered in his condemnation of the French alliance.

15*th March;* Bracci to the Ten.[4]—The Pope cannot understand why the Ten are in such high spirits (onde alle S. V. si nascesse tanta ghagliardia), but he believes it to be due to the confidence which they place in the prophecies of Savonarola, whom he styles "quello vostro parabolano." If his Holiness could personally address the Florentine people, he has no doubt that he would be able to convince them of their error to their own advantage, and to deliver them from the blindness into which the Friar has led them. But his chief complaint is that the Signory and the people suffer him to inveigh against and to threaten the present occupant—unworthy though he be—of the Holy See.[5] Bracci has replied that, although by reason of official business he has never heard the Prior preach, he has also never heard that he has exceeded the limits of modesty and prudence. His doctrine is irreproachable, and his life and conduct are those of an excellent religious man (religioso di somma bontà).

19*th March;* Becchi to the Ten.[6]—The Pope is well-disposed, but the Duke of Milan and the Venetians are indignant that Florence has not

[1] Gherardi, p. 148.

[2] Gherardi, p. 149.

[3] Yet only a week previously Manfredi had written: "The city is more divided than ever" (Cappelli, n. 107, *supra*).

[4] Gherardi, p. 153.

[5] "Che quelli vostri Signori et cittadini sopportino che da lui siamo lacerati et vilipesi, minacciati et conculcati, che pure sediamo, licet immeriti, in questa Santa Sede."

[6] Gherardi, p. 154.

joined the League. They are stirring up the Pope against the Republic, and persuade him that the mission of Bracci is merely a device to gain time till it becomes clear what the French are going to do. "They consider that this obstinacy of yours proceeds entirely from the advice and persuasion of the Friar; and that even if you wished to take a decisive step, and show yourselves good Italians, you would not be able to do so without his consent." They ridicule you for this, and the more so because they understand that at this very time his Paternity has once more reasserted all that he has said about the King of France, has threatened Italy and especially Rome, and has spoken of the reformation of the Church, etc. And if his Paternity will not consent to this union with the other convents of Tuscany on which, after mature deliberation, and with the concurrence of other Cardinals and prelates, Caraffa has determined, they will proceed against him with censures and will excommunicate him. Nay, it is here publicly said that he is already excommunicate, for not having obeyed the late Brief. Caraffa urges obedience, alleging that the union is "truly the work of God," and not the outcome of calumnies, etc.

23rd March; Becchi to the Ten.[1]—Every one thinks that you ought to take efficacious measures for the recovery of Pisa, even at the cost of giving Leghorn or Volterra, or both, as hostages for your fidelity. But here it is said that even if the League were to offer you Pisa without conditions they would have to implore you to accept it, because "the Friar will not allow you to deliberate" on the matter. The city is said to be divided between the Friar and the League. One of the Cardinals has declared that, if only you would be united, all would be well, and that you would soon be delivered from the present scarcity; but that every one laughs at the Florentines for allowing themselves to be ruled by a friar. Were it not for the Friar you would, he says, long since have joined the League.

1st April; The Ten to Becchi.[2]—They are grateful for the Cardinal's kind advice, for it is their principal desire to be united. But in fact there is neither discord or disunion in the city, since all are determined to preserve their liberty and the present form of government. If any one has reported otherwise he is a deceiver. And if the character of the men who carry such tales were considered, it would be clear to all how vain are the hopes of Piero de' Medici (quanto debole fondamento sia quello di P. d. M.). His friends are few and desperate, men of no condition or credit. We assure you that the persons whom he seeks to win over to his cause are not the kind of men who will go to sea without victualling their ship ("embarchare facilmente sanza bischotto"). As for the Friar, we are not governed by him. He fulfils the office of a good and zealous preacher after a manner which compels our gratitude; but he does not meddle in the details of politics (sanza impacciarsi di alcuno particulare circa il governo nostro). Any statement to the contrary is

[1] Gherardi, p. 156. [2] Gherardi, p. 157.

false, and is dictated by the passions of men, who dislike the restraints of a virtuous life (da passione di alchuni a' quali dispiace il ben vivere).

2nd April; Somenzi to Sforza.[1]—The recent elections are such as to give no hopes to Piero de' Medici. It is true that some of his friends are in office, but their influence is counteracted by that of others. As for the followers of Fra Girolamo, who are favourable to the French alliance, they are now discredited. And because they cannot justify themselves and their policy, they console themselves by saying all they can against the Duke of Milan. (The letter is of no serious importance except as showing how Somenzi could foment discord by reporting to his master the political tittle-tattle of the city.)

The last two letters were written in the Easter week of 1497, and a month's gap in the correspondence affords a suitable opportunity for taking account of the Lenten sermons (on Ezechiel) which Fra Girolamo had preached during the two preceding months. Like all his sermons they had been full of vehement and thrilling denunciations of vice, and more especially of vice in the high and holy places of the Church. As heretofore, so now, he does not spare the abuses of the Roman court. But in the concluding words of the passages now to be quoted he strikes a fresh note of warning which shows clearly his presentiment of a crisis at hand, not for himself alone but for the Church at large. Those who believe in his prophetic mission would say, we presume, that if he did not live to cry: "Lazarus, come forth," and if Alexander VI. did not live to hear the cry, nevertheless the summons came in God's own time, and in God's own way, though too late to hinder the desolating catastrophe of the Protestant Reformation. These are the preacher's words, as slightly abridged by Villari:—

"Come hither, thou profligate Church (ribalda Chiesa). I gave thee, saith the Lord, beautiful garments, and ye have made idols of them. The sacred vessels have served your pride, the sacraments have been turned to simony; by your vices you have become a shameless harlot; you are worse than a brute beast, you are a horrible monster! There was a time when you were ashamed of your sins, but this is no more so. There was a time when priests called their sons nephews; now they are no longer nephews, but sons—sons and no mistake (figliuoli per tutto). . . . O harlot Church, you have made your deformity known to all the world, and the stench of your foulness has risen up to heaven. . . . Behold, I will stretch forth my hands, saith the Lord, I will come upon thee, thou profligate and wicked one; my sword shall be upon thy children . . . upon thy harlots and upon thy palaces, and my justice shall be made

[1] Villari, ii. Append. p. xxvi.

known. Heaven, earth, angels, good men and wicked shall accuse thee, and no one shall stand up for thee; I will deliver thee into the hands of those that hate thee.[1]" "O ye priests and friars, you by your bad example have buried this people in the grave of ceremonies. I tell you that this grave must be broken open, because Christ wishes to raise up His Church again in spirit. . . . We must all pray for this renewal. Write to France, to Germany, write to every place: This Friar says that you must all have recourse to the Lord, and pray that the Lord may vouchsafe to come. Do you suppose that we alone are good? That there are no servants of God in other places? Jesus Christ has many servants; there are many such in Germany, in France, in Spain, who now lie hidden, and mourn over this disease (of the Church). In every city, and town, and village, in every religious Order, there are those who have a share in this fire. These send to ask me to say a word in their ear, and I answer: 'Stay quiet (state nascosti) till you shall hear the summons (infino a che si dirà): Lazarus, come forth.' As for me, I stand here because the Lord has sent me to you, and I wait till He shall call me. Then will I utter a loud cry which shall be heard in all Christendom, and shall make the body of the Church to tremble, even as the voice of God made that of Lazarus to tremble."[2]

Nor is the impending excommunication absent from his thoughts.

"Many of you tell me that excommunications are coming; but I tell you that there is need of something else than of excommunications.[3] 'But are you not afraid?' Not I, for they wish to excommunicate me because I do no evil. Bring this excommunication aloft on a spear-head, and open the gates to it. I will answer it; and if I do not make you to marvel, say afterwards what you please. I will make many faces on every side grow pale; and I will send forth a cry which will make the world quake and upheave."[4]

Those who will may defend the resistance offered by Fra Girolamo to Alexander VI. The fact at least is not to be denied, in view of this very open and explicit declaration of war *à outrance*.

On 28th April, just before the termination of Bernardo del Nero's term of office, Piero de' Medici, whose hopes, as has been seen, had been raised by the appointment, presented himself in the early

[1] S. 32 on Ezechiel (Villari, ii. 4). A fuller text is given in Villari and Casanova, pp. 267 *sqq*.

[2] Villari, ii. 4, 5.

[3] "Ma io vi ripeto che si cerca altro che scomuniche." Villari's English translator renders these words (which are certainly obscure): "But I again repeat to you that those in power are thinking of something else than excommunications" (ii. 161).

[4] Villari, ii. 5.

morning with a small body of troops at the gate of S. Piero Gattolini (now the Porta Romana) in the hopes of effecting an entry into the city as soon as the gate should be opened. Warning had, however, been given; the gate was kept closed, no demonstration in his favour was made within the city; and after waiting all day outside the gate, exposed to the gibes of the guards, at last towards evening he took himself off and retired to Siena. "It was considered," says Landucci, "a most foolish proceeding (fu tenuto la piu sciocca cosa)"; but, as has been related in a former chapter, it cost del Nero his life. He had done his best to dissuade Piero, but he would not divulge the conspiracy; and it may have been due to him that Piero was not taken prisoner as he might easily have been. Manfredi writes to d'Este, a few days afterwards, that a false report of Piero's success had reached Rome, that the Cardinal de' Medici went off to tell the Pope, and was making preparations to celebrate the occasion by a display of fireworks, but that when the news of the fiasco arrived, the Pope declared that it served Piero right, since he had managed this business as badly as the rest of his affairs. Yet the Pope subsequently declared that he had known nothing about the matter! It is charitable to suppose that he meant only to deny all previous cognisance of the details of the plot. As for Savonarola, when Filippo Arigucci, one of the Signory, sent Girolamo Benivieni to ask him whether he had heard the news of Piero's expedition, he reproached them both with their little faith, and plainly told them (as Benivieni himself used to relate) that Piero would come as far as the city gate and would return without having effected anything.[1]

The ignominious failure of Piero's attempt no doubt contributed to the election of a Signory for May and June which contained at least several members of the Arrabbiati, a faction far more openly hostile to Savonarola than the Palleschi; and the results of the election soon made themselves felt in his regard. A consultation was held on 3rd May in which it was determined that, in view of the plague which was raging, it would be desirable to inhibit all preaching in the churches of the city.[2] The following day was the festival of the Ascension, and immediately after the sermons which were to be preached on that day the benches which had been placed for the convenience of the audience were to be cleared away ("adeo quod per totam diem quintam præsentis mensis Maii disgonbrentur

[1] Nardi, i. 105.

[2] Villari, ii. Append. p. xxxv.

(*sic*) ad effectum ut super eis dicte predicationes audiri non possint"). It is curious to find that bets had been already freely laid as to whether sermons would be allowed even on that day, and among the resolutions passed at the Pratica was one which annulled all such bets.[1]

But the Compagnacci, a graceless gang of violent and licentious swashbucklers, whose movements were directed by the notorious Doffo Spini, not content with this measure, forced an entrance into the Duomo on the night of 3rd May, befouled the pulpit with ordure, and on the following day raised such a tumult in the church that Fra Girolamo's sermon was of necessity brought to a premature close.[2] The disgraceful scene, in which two members of the new Board of Eight are said to have taken part, is related by several contemporary writers, and Landucci, in particular, feelingly laments the state of spiritual starvation to which the people were now reduced, and which they had to bear in addition to the scourge of the prevalent scarcity and sickness.[3]

[1] "Quia ad eorum aures pervenit quod . . . facte fuerunt mulcte, ut dicitur, 'scommesse' . . . utrum prædicabitur cras in dicta civitate nec ne . . . declaraverunt . . . dictas ut vulgo dicitur 'scommesse' . . . non valuisse et non valere modo aliquo" (Villari, ii. Append. p. xxxvii.). Villari (ii. 18) makes the bets turn on what Savonarola in particular would do. The terms of the resolution seem to imply that the point in question was whether preaching on the 4th would be allowed or prohibited. Landucci (*Diario*, 5th May and 11th June) notes that while sermons was prohibited, taverns of evil repute were thrown open, and certain sports (which could hardly fail to draw a greater crowd than any sermon) were revived.

[2] "Nel mese di maggio . . . successe nel magistrato (essendo gonfaloniere di giustizia Piero degli Alberti) una certa qualità d' uomini molto contrari al Frate, e alla mente di quelli era in tutto conforme il magistrato degli otto" (Nardi, i. 107). Guicciardini states (pp. 150-51) that Savonarola's enemies were in a majority of one on the Board. He still had four supporters in the new Signory.

[3] Landucci, 27th May and 1st June.

CHAPTER XII

THE EXCOMMUNICATION

IT was little more than a week after the outrage which has been related at the close of the last chapter that the Brief *Cum sæpe â quamplurimis*, whereby Fra Girolamo was declared excommunicate, was issued by Alexander VI. And, indeed the conjunction of events does at first sight seem to lay the Pontiff open to the charge of having waited till the Friar was down, before striking this final blow. Yet, on further consideration, it seems more than doubtful whether such a view of the matter can be substantiated. Since the close of Lent, and in particular since the failure of Piero's abortive attempt on the city, more than one of Savonarola's enemies—and among them Fra Mariano da Gennazzano and one Gianvittorio da Camerino—had betaken themselves to Rome, and had used their utmost efforts to stir up the Pope to take strong measures against him. On 1st May, before the news of the election of the new Signory can have reached Rome, Bracci reports to the Ten that the Pope has expressed his wish that the authorities would prevail upon Savonarola to cease from speaking ill of him. Bracci replied that the Friar had never attacked his Holiness individually, and that the reports to the contrary must have originated with that malicious tale-bearer, Camerino.[1] On 6th May the Ten inform Bracci that all preaching has been stopped for the present. Savonarola, they admit, may have "incidentally" exceeded the bounds of moderation, but on the whole he exercises the functions of a preacher "modestamente." Nevertheless, when he recommences, he shall be admonished.[2] It is perhaps not a matter for surprise that assurances of this kind did not satisfy the Pope, and did not avail to ward off the sentence. Issued on 13th May, the Brief was not published at Florence till more than a month later, a delay which was caused by the choice of Camerino to be its bearer. The envoy came on his way as far as Siena. Further he dared not venture, for fear, as he said, lest he

[1] Gherardi, p. 158. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 159.

should be torn in pieces by the adherents of the Friar.[1] He had indeed good reason to be afraid, not perhaps of any overt act of popular vengeance, but of legal pains and penalties. For only a few months previously he had been expelled the city, and the Eight, though they were even more hostile to Fra Girolamo than the new Signory, might have found it difficult to pass over any infraction of the decree of banishment. The Arrabbiati appear to have dreaded the consequences of the appearance of so unpopular a man in the city at this juncture, and Parenti declares that they sent him a message warning him not to come.[2] Accordingly he remained at Siena till the middle of June, and the Signory, though fully informed by their ambassadors in Rome, and by Camerino himself, of the existence of the Brief, had no official cognisance of its contents. Enough, however, was known to give occasion for a determined attempt, in a Pratica held on 20th May, to procure a decree of banishment against the Friar;[3] an attempt, however, which proved abortive for lack of a two-thirds majority. It is strange that even under a Signory thus disposed, the Ten, who had entered upon their term of office in January, and were still in power, continued to write in his favour to their ambassadors in Rome. It was somewhat as though the Foreign Office were to carry on a correspondence independently of, and to some extent in opposition to, Her Majesty's government. And yet the opposition was perhaps more apparent than real. For, as afterwards appeared, many of those who were ready enough to condemn Savonarola on their own account were by no means desirous that the Pope should interfere (as they regarded the matter) in the affairs of the city. It is also a characteristic sign of the times that precisely at this juncture a sort of hybrid Committee of Public Safety had been appointed, embracing men of all parties, in order to preserve the internal peace of the city.[4]

[1] Nardi, i. 102.

[2] "Riputando li adversarii del Frate che tale mandatario incorrere potrebbe nella pena, *e dare sturbo al procedersi contro al Frate*, per la via l'advertirono non venissi," etc. (Parenti *apud* Gherardi, p. 162). The circumstances under which Camerino had been banished are not clearly known. His offence (committed under a government friendly to Savonarola) seems to have been that of having brought malicious accusations against the Friar (Gherardi, p. 161; Parenti, *ibid.*).

[3] *Lettere à Filippo Strozzi* (Villari, ii. 25).

[4] Their names are given by Guicciardini (*Storia Fiorentina*, p. 151). Among them were such conspicuous party chiefs as Bernardo del Nero, Guidantonio Vespucci, and Francesco Valori.

Becchi's next letter is characteristic of the man. He is a diligent retailer of gossip, and not a little credulous. We may well hesitate to believe, on no better authority than his, the truth of the charges which he makes against the two Cardinals, Caraffa and Lopez.

19*th May;* Becchi to the Ten.[1]—Concerning the Brief [*Cum sæpe*] Ser Alessandro will have informed you, and also concerning the promise made to us by "Napoli" (*i.e.* Caraffa, Archbishop of Naples), and of his audience with the Pope. But I must not omit to inform you who it is that has obtained the Brief. For the Pope, though indignant with the Friar, and determined to punish him, nevertheless would not have proceeded to extremities had he not been instigated thereto. "And although many excuse themselves, professing not to have known any thing about it, I hereby make known to your Lordships that Monsignore reverendissimo di Napoli is its real author, along with many other Cardinals. And Perugia, too (*i.e* Lopez), although he swears that he knew nothing about the Brief till after the departure of Messer G. da Camerino—yet I know for certain that his most Reverend Lordship is at the bottom of the whole affair (ha solecitato tutto)." And all this is being done to satisfy the Cardinal de' Medici and the friends of Piero.

20*th May;* The Ten to Bracci.[2]—They have received his letters, informing them of his negotiations with the Pope and Caraffa on behalf of Savonarola. They are no less indignant than surprised to hear of the steps that are being taken against him; for all proceeds from misrepresentations. Any one who will examine the manner of Fra Girolamo's preaching, will see that he has never blamed or reprehended any individual in particular, but has inveighed against vice in general, which is the office of a preacher. He has never made express mention in his sermons either of the Pope or of any Cardinal, or indeed of any other person. For the rest, his preaching has produced the most abundant fruits, by reason of his learning and of his most religious life; so much so that it may be said with truth that the city is extremely indebted to his Paternity for having brought it to a good rule and pattern of life. Bracci must implore the Pope and the Cardinal of Naples to proceed in this matter with the gravity and deliberation which befits them.

In the meanwhile Fra Girolamo, fully apprised of the machinations of his enemies, and probably having more than an inkling of the despatch of the Brief, wrote a letter[3] to the Pope of which we give the substance, and in part the words:—

"For what reason [he asks], is my Lord angry with his servant?

[1] Gherardi, p. 163.

[2] Gherardi, *ibid.* Bracci's letters, here referred to, are lost.

[3] The letter is given by Quétif, ii. 125 *sqq.*

Have I done wrong, because my enemies accuse me? Why does not my Lord interrogate his servant, and listen to his reply before believing the charges against him? . . . For your Holiness holds the place of God on earth." His enemies accuse him, says the writer, of having ceaselessly carped at the Pope with injurious words. He wonders that Alexander does not see through their malice. Thousands of witnesses, and his own printed words, bear testimony in his favour. How can that high and mighty preacher (concionator iste egregius et sublimatus, *i.e.* Fra Mariano) have the face to charge him with a fault of which—as many can testify—he is himself guilty. Fra Girolamo remembers well how he once had occasion to reprove him for the insolent words which he had dared to utter from the pulpit against his Holiness. "As for me, I have always submitted to correction, and as often as there shall be need I will again and again submit." His practice is continually to invite all men to penance, and he intends as soon as possible to issue his work, *De Triumpho Crucis*, from which the soundness of his doctrines will appear. If all other help fails, he will confide in God.[1]

It appears from the subsequent correspondence of the Florentine envoys in Rome with the Ten, that Alexander was touched by this letter, and if we may believe Bracci, that he even repented of having issued the Brief.[2] However this may be, the document had left the Pope's hands, and at last on Sunday, 18th June, it was solemnly published in Florence. The following is a summary of its contents:—

We have [says the Pope] on various occasions been informed by very many persons worthy of credit, both ecclesiastics and laymen, that a certain Fra Girolamo Savonarola of Ferrara, of the Order of Preachers, Vicar—as is reported (ut auditur)—of S. Marco at Florence, has disseminated certain pernicious teachings (quoddam pernitiosum dogma) to the scandal and ruin of simple souls redeemed by the blood of Christ. This we have heard not without displeasure: but because we hoped that he would recognise his error, and would soon retrace his steps (sese retrahere a periculosa via), and that with true simplicity of heart, humility, and obedience he would return to Christ, and to the Holy Church, we addressed to him a Brief, wherein we commanded him, in virtue of holy obedience, to come to us that he might purge himself of the errors charged against him, and in the meanwhile to desist from preaching. He, however, would by no means obey. We, for our part,

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[1] The limits of our space do not permit of our giving anything in the nature of a summary of the treatise, *De Triumpho Crucis*. It is remarkable as anticipating those apologetic treatises which now find a place in the curriculum of our theological schools. An English translation, by Mr Travers Hill, was published by Hodder & Stoughton in 1868.

[2] These letters will be summarised later.

dealt with him perchance more mildly than the case required, and bore with (toleravimus) certain excuses which he alleged, and even tolerated (substinuimus, *sic*) his disobedience in continuing to preach notwithstanding our prohibition, in the hope that our clemency would cause him to return to the way of obedience. But as our hopes were disappointed, in a Brief dated 7th November [1496], we commanded him, in virtue of holy obedience, and under pain of excommunication to be incurred *ipso facto*, to unite his convent with a certain new congregation styled 'of the Roman and Tuscan province,' recently erected by us. This ordinance he failed to carry out, nor would he in any wise obey our letters, disregarding the ecclesiastical censures which he thereby incurred, and under which he now lies (insordescit). Wherefore, that we may not be wanting in our pastoral duty, we command you publicly to declare him excommunicate.[1] Moreover, all persons of whatsoever condition are to be warned that they are to avoid the said Fra Hieronymo as a person excommunicated and suspected of heresy, and this under the like pain of excommunication.[2]

Landucci, who was present, describes the publication of the sentence in the Augustinian church of Santo Spirito, and tells us that it was also promulgated in several other churches of the city. Savonarola lost no time in issuing his counterblast. We deliberately call it by this name, because it was not a letter respectfully addressed to the Pope, setting forth his reasons for having disobeyed his commands, and the grounds on which the sentence appeared to him unjust and invalid, but a manifesto addressed "to all Christians" ("a tutti li Christiani et diletti di Dio").[3]

The writer of this private encyclical describes himself as

"The servant of Christ Jesus, sent by Him to the city of Florence to announce the great scourge which is to come upon Italy, and especially upon Rome, and which is to extend itself over all the world, in our days and quickly; to the end that His elect may find themselves prepared in the midst of so great tribulations, and may thus escape the anger of God, who wishes in this way to remove evils and to renovate His Church and the whole universe."

And he thus continues:—

"May God then be thanked for His great goodness, in that He has chosen us to be the ministers of this truth, on which account we willingly

[1] "Ut in vestris Ecclesiis, diebus festivis, dum populi aderit multitudo, declaretis et pronuntietis dictum fratrem Hieronymum excommunicatum, et pro excommunicato haberi et censeri ab omnibus, eo quod nostris . . . monitis et mandatis non paruerit."

[2] The text of the Brief is given by Villari, ii. Append. pp. xxxix., xl.; del Lungo, p. 17.

[3] Quétif, ii. 185 *sqq.*

suffer many tribulations, God willing that by this means the report of our prophecies (la fama di questa Prophetia) may be spread through every part of Christendom, yea, over all the world; that all may be disposed to receive the grace of the Holy Spirit, whereby the intended renovation may be brought about. As for the wicked, who seek to suppress this prophecy, they in fact co-operate in its fulfilment. Thus it was that Joseph's brethren, by selling him to the Midianites, thought to make sure that he would never be lord over them, and yet this very act brought about the fulfilment of the prophecy. Herod, thinking by the slaughter of the children to bring to naught the prophecies which foretold the coming of Christ, in fact helped to fulfil them. So, too, the Jews, who put our Lord to death, and those who persecuted and slew the apostles and martyrs, fulfilled the prophecies of the Old and the New Testament. And even so at this present time the prophecies which we have uttered are being brought to their issue; and among them you see that one in particular, which concerned the excommunication, is now being brought to pass; for I repeatedly spoke of it to you many years since, when no one thought of such a thing. Wherefore from this and many others, which with your own eyes you see to have been already fulfilled, you may firmly believe that all those which have not yet come to pass will come to pass in the future, and that God will deliver us from every danger, and will give us a great victory.

"Remember how I told you that, in return for the benefits of which I was the instrument, I expected nothing but tribulation, and that only one thing was wanting to the full measure of the malice of our enemies in Rome and elsewhere, namely, that they should persecute the servants of God. But whereas the 'tepidi' do not desist from their efforts, I would not have you, on this account, to falter and to abandon the way of truth. Remember our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Apostles and Saints of past times; remember what I have told you of S. John Chrysostom, S. Athanasius, S. Jerome, S. Hilary, and many others who have suffered greater things than we.

"Do not believe then, dearly beloved, that those excommunications have any validity which are based upon misrepresentations (lequale sono fatte per false suggestioni di huomini), and which are put forth with an evil intent, in opposition to God and the truth. Unable to find a just cause for procuring my excommunication, my enemies have suggested false reasons to the Pope, saying that I disseminate pernicious doctrines and heresies, whereas I have preached only the doctrine of Christ.

"And whereas they accuse me of disobedience, be assured that I was never disobedient to the Holy Roman Church, nor to the Pope, nor to any superior of mine down to the present hour; and this I say, not in self-praise, but for the sake of truth; and I am willing that this writing shall stand against me at the tribunal of Christ. It is true that some people think that when a man declines to obey in those things which are expressly contrary to God, this is disobedience; but in fact it is monstrous (una cosa grossa) to suppose that we are bound to obey our superiors

in everything. For we ought to obey our Superior in so far as he holds the place of God ; but he does not hold the place of God, and is not our superior, when he commands what is contrary to God. Accordingly, it has happened that in such a case as this I have not obeyed, knowing that neither God nor the Church wishes me to obey in things that are contrary to their commands."

From the discussion of the general question as to the circumstances under which a subject is or is not bound to obey his superior, Fra Girolamo proceeds to consider the specific objection that he has disobeyed in the matter of the new Congregation. He writes :—

"I have often answered that those who persuaded the Pope to take this course did so not out of zeal for religion, but solely in order to persecute me, and in this way to find an occasion of proceeding against me ; for they foresaw that I would never consent to a union which they knew well to be mischievous. But I have set forth twelve reasons, to which they cannot reply, why this union is contrary to the honour of God and the good of souls. I answered, among other things, that they demanded of me a thing which was not in my power, for it required the consent of my brethren, who were all opposed to it as to a thing most pernicious. Moreover, it seemed well to assemble the fathers of the young men who had committed themselves to our guidance, and to declare to them the conditions of the proposed union, to the end that they and the city might never be able to reproach us with having deceived their sons, whom we certainly should have deceived (ingannati) had we consented to this union ; for they would have relaxed their observance, and would have become like those 'tepidi,' concerning whom we have proved that they are the worst men in the world (li peggiori huomini del mondo). Rather than this, it had been better that they should have stayed with their families. I answered, moreover, that being an alien by birth, if these fathers and brothers of ours should consent to the union, I could not oppose them ; but that if they did not consent, I could not force them. And so I left the matter in their hands. Now they have declared in writing that they will not consent, but will rather suffer excommunication and imprisonment, and even martyrdom (martyrii). If, then, this is so, why do they impute this disobedience to me? Is it not that these adversaries of mine seek only one man, whom they hate because he tells the truth (el quale hanno in odio per la verità)? You see, then, dearly beloved, how great is the daring of our enemies, who are not ashamed to suggest manifest lies to the Pope. Therefore, such excommunications are not valid, nor are they in accordance with the intentions of the Church. And if they quote that maxim of the Canon Law, 'sententia pastoris timenda est sive justa sive injusta,' you have my answer to this in a sermon which I delivered more than a year ago."

The writer ends by begging their prayers that God would deign "to set His hand to something more forcible than reason." For

men have now reached such a pitch of malice that they shamelessly resist reason and the truth, and think only of living at their ease (allegramente).

"Wherefore, if these our arguments are not listened to, and if they seek to take further steps against us, we will make this truth known to all the world after such a fashion that no one will be able to gainsay it. For God, at such time as He sees good, to the confusion of Christians who will not use their reason, will cause irrational creatures to render homage to the truth against which His rational creatures contend. Pray God that this may be soon."

With this somewhat obscure, yet unmistakable appeal to a forthcoming miracle, the letter concludes. We have all but translated the whole document from beginning to end, that the reader may be in full possession of Fra Girolamo's defence. However, before discussing in detail the merits of the case, we will give his second letter in reply to the sentence of excommunication. In the meanwhile, we call our readers' attention to the fact that Savonarola is consistent throughout. His attitude to the Brief *Cum sæpe a quamplurimis* is in full accordance with the position which he had taken up from the outset of his career in Florence.

A few days after his first protest against the sentence of excommunication—a protest addressed as has been seen to the faithful at large—Savonarola wrote a second letter, in answer to enquiries addressed to him on the subject, in which he more fully sets forth his position. It is of special interest as dealing with the subject from the point of view of the Canon Law.[1]

"You ask me [he writes] whether such an excommunication as that which we have recently shown to be unjust ought, at least, to be observed in public. To this question Petrus de Palude and S. Antoninus have given a clear reply. An unjust excommunication is to be respected (timenda) they say, not on account of the penalty, which from the nature of the case is null, but for conscience' sake, by reason of the danger of scandal. But, here again much depends on circumstances. When the nullity of a sentence is known to the learned (sapientibus) but not to the common people, a man may disregard it in private, but he must respect and observe it in public until there is reasonable ground to hold that the danger of scandal has ceased. For instance, if one has been publicly excommunicated and publicly denounced, he should publicly declare the grounds on which the sentence is invalid; and when this has been done, there is no longer any danger of scandal to the weak (*scandalum*

[1] Quétif, ii. 190 *sqq.*

pusillorum), and there is room only for pharisaic scandal (*scandalum Pharisæorum*), which may be safely despised.

"So far Paludanus. But long before him Pelagius had declared that an unjust sentence may be disregarded, since in the eyes of God and the Church an unjust sentence cannot bind any man, and a man thus sentenced stands in no need of absolution.[1]

"Wherefore, since it has already been made clear to all the people that this excommunication was extorted by means of misrepresentations importunately urged, to the end that men might have greater liberty to sin, and since in a letter recently published I have set forth the truth of the matter, and have thereby removed the danger of public scandal (in populum scandalum sedando), and shown good cause for regarding the sentence as unjust, I am not bound to obey it even in public, nor can any one be scandalised hereat, unless he wishes to declare himself a Pharisee.

The writer next quotes at great length from Gerson's tract, *De excommunicatione et irregularitate.*

"'The guilt of disobedience,' says Gerson, 'is incurred where a man refuses to obey lawful authority lawfully exercised; and the latter qualification is necessary, because otherwise prelates might use their power to reduce men to slavery. Hence the maxim, *sententia . . . etiam injusta timenda est*, needs explanation, for to give an unqualified submission to an unjust sentence would be to show the patience of an ass, and the foolish timidity of a hare (esset asinina patientia et timor leporinus et fatuus).' After asserting the lawfulness of an appeal from the Pope to a General Council, Gerson goes on to say that, 'in many cases the Pope may be disobeyed without fault, namely, when he scandalously and beyond all measure (enormissime et scandalosissime) abuses his power' to an evil end. Moreover, one who has the support of a single canonist or theologian in favour of his conviction that a particular sentence is unjust, may safely disregard that sentence, provided only that due precautions are taken not to scandalise those weak souls 'who think that the Pope is a God (qui existimant Papam esse unum Deum) who has all power in heaven and on earth. The foolishness of such persons is to be driven out of them by suitable instructions.'

"Behold [adds Savonarola] how entirely to our purpose are the words of Gerson. To suppose, therefore, that all censures are to be obeyed, proceeds from ignorance, which, in priests and religious, is unbecoming and mischievous. Yet there are some who are so blind and hasty in their judgments as to affirm that all who come to our convent, or who speak with us, are *ipso facto* excommunicate, whereas this is, at least, very doubtful. Nay, some even go so far as to say that those who converse

[1] *Decr.* II, q. 3, cxlvi. The Pope, however, who is named in the text of the *Decretum* is Gelasius, not Pelagius. Whoever may be the real author of the decree, it is obvious that he must here be understood to speak of a sentence which is plainly and notoriously unjust.

with the frequenters of our convent are themselves excommunicate. Such persons labour under crass ignorance, to use no harder words (ut graviora taceam)."

The letter ends with an exhortation to pray for the Church, that God may once more enlighten her as of old.

From this manifesto it is clear that Savonarola believed, or had at least persuaded himself, not only that the sentence of excommunication was in itself invalid, but also that after his first public protest he was under no obligation of respecting it even in public.

It is worth while to note explicitly on what grounds this persuasion was based. And in the first place it was not based on the merely declaratory character of the Brief, as though for this reason alone it had been inoperative. This is a line of defence which has been taken up quite recently by some of Fra Girolamo's apologists. The Pope, it is affirmed, did not excommunicate him, but simply declared him to be excommunicate.[1] Savonarola, however, urges no such plea as this. He treats the sentence as formally effective, and as inoperative on material grounds alone.[2]

And as regards these material grounds he argues from what he holds to be a sound principle of Canon Law, as expounded very clearly and emphatically by Gerson, and less clearly, but in his opinion not less unmistakably, by the other authorities to whom he refers.

Is it then to be admitted, or can it be maintained, that Savonarola's action was in itself defensible? We think not, and for several reasons. In the first place in order to form a reasonable judgment on the subject it is most important to distinguish clearly between three distinct questions. The first is as to the duty of obedience in the matter of the new Congregation. The second concerns the validity of the sentence of excommunication, which was the penalty imposed for refusing to obey. And the third is as

[1] This is the main argument of a pamphlet entitled *Fu veramente escommunicato Savonarola?* by Father L. G. Lottini, O.P. (Milan, 1898).

[2] This point has been very clearly put in a recent number (6th August) of the *Civiltà Cattolica*. After quoting abundant evidence from the sermons of Fra Girolamo and other contemporary documents, the writer concludes: "Se dunque non si vuol far violenza alla storia ed al senso ovvio che hanno le espressioni di chi parla o scrive, convien dire che fra Girolamo e tutti i suoi amici e nemici presero il Breve nel senso *inflittivo*, cioè di una vera e propria scomunica *de præsenti*, e non già nel senso *dichiarativo* di censure incorse precedentemente" (p. 310).

to the duty of observing the excommunication at least in public, even supposing that it was in itself null.

First, then, as regards the refusal to obey the precept of union. Dr Schnitzer quotes a number of passages from the writings of various eminent canonists, Innocent IV., Nicholas de Tudeschis (Panormitanus), Felino Sandeo, and Sylvester Mazzolini (Prierias), as to the obedience due, or not due, under various circumstances, to an unjust command.[1] Lest we should even appear to deserve the reproach of understating the case for the defence, we give these passages as nearly as possible in their entirety.

Innocent IV. writes:—

"But how if the Pope should impose an unjust precept, seeing that he has no superior with whom the subject can treat? It may be said that, if he command anything touching spiritual or ecclesiastical persons, he is to be obeyed even if the command be unjust, because it is not lawful for any one to judge of his actions . . . unless the command should involve some heresy, for then to obey would be sinful; or unless there should be a strong presumption (nisi vehementer præsumeretur) that, from the execution of the command, there would ensue a disturbance of the peace of the Church, or other evil consequences, for then he would sin by obeying, since it is his duty to provide against future evils, not to foment them."[2]

Panormitanus says:—

"If the prince should impose any precept from the execution of which it is to be presumed that scandal will arise in the State, the subject ought not to obey. And in like manner, it is to be said that, if the prince orders anything which is contrary to [the law of] God, he is not to be obeyed, and this even if the prince believes that he is acting justly, and the judge alone is aware that the precept is sinful."[3]

The concluding words of the above paragraph ("et *judici* notum sit, etc.") show that the case contemplated is that of an official, exercising subordinate authority, who is commanded to do something in the exercise of his office which he sees to be sinful. The principle, however, is perfectly general, and under all circumstances the law holds good that conscience is supreme over individual conduct. Thus Panormitanus writes elsewhere: "Against the

[1] Schnitzer, pp. 787 *sqq.*

[2] Innoc. IV. in cap. 44, *Inquisitioni;* 5 *Decr.*, tit. 39 (n. 3). It must be understood that there is no question here of injustice to a third person. The injustice supposed is towards the subject to whom the command is addressed.

[3] Panorm. in cap. 5, *Si quando:* 1 *Decr.*, tit. 3 (n. 2).

law of conscience, the superior, even if he be the Pope himself, is not to be obeyed,"[1] and again, even more explicitly :—

"Sometimes the superior prescribes what is evidently just, and then he is to be obeyed, unless the subject conscientiously believes that the command is unjust, and cannot rid himself of this belief; for in that case he must follow his conscience, however erroneous this may be;"[2]

that is to say, provided that the error itself is not there and then culpable or "vincible."

The Florentine Sandeo, and the Dominican Prierias, both contemporaries of Savonarola, lay down substantially the same principles with regard to the duty of obedience to a Papal command. "The Pope is to be obeyed," says Sandeo, "even if the command be unjust," unless there be fear of scandal, or of an evil issue, or of injury to the Church.[3] We may observe that the phrase "unless there be fear (nisi dubitaretur)" seems to leave the door dangerously wide open. If every subject who "doubts" concerning the evil results of carrying out a precept laid upon him were justified in withholding obedience, it is easy to imagine what the state of ecclesiastical discipline would speedily become. Prierias expresses himself with greater caution :—

"The question is asked [he says] whether the Pope is to be obeyed in all things. Panormitanus says . . . No. In the first place [he is not to be obeyed] when he commands what is sinful, and this even though the sin be but venial . . . or again, even though the Pope should believe the command to be just, while the subject is convinced (et tamen subdito *constat*) that it involves sin. Nor, secondly [is he to be obeyed], if there is a presumption that the peace of the Church will be greatly disturbed, or that some other evil or scandal will result from obedience to the precept, *and this even though the precept be imposed under pain of excommunication* to be *ipso facto* incurred (latæ sententiæ), as the same Panormitanus teaches."[4]

But it by no means certainly follows that because on the principles laid down by these writers a man may in certain cases lawfully decline to obey the Pope, or may even be bound in conscience so to do, and this even though he should be commanded under pain of

[1] In cap. 44, *Inquisitioni ;* 5 *Decr.*, tit. 39 (n. 3).

[2] In cap. 5, *Ad aures ;* 1 *Decr.*, tit. 11 (n. 2).

[3] "Nisi præcepto suo dubitaretur de scandalo, vel malo eventu, vel de statu ecclesiæ" (Sandeus in cap. *Inquisitioni, ut supra*).

[4] Prierias, *Summa Summarum*, s.v. *Obedientia.*

excommunication, the ecclesiastical censure is therefore invalid. This is a point on which there has apparently been some difference of opinion among canonists and theologians. Thus, Panormitanus declares that if a subject be excommunicated by a subordinate prelate for declining to obey an unjust precept, he must have recourse to a higher authority; which at least seems to imply that he regards the penal sentence, even for an act of disobedience which is not in itself blameworthy, as *per se* juridically valid.[1] S. Antoninus expresses his opinion on the subject with much greater clearness:—

"Although [he writes] one who inflicts an unjust sentence of excommunication sins grievously, and is liable to punishment in various ways, nevertheless, in law, such a sentence holds and binds the subject so far as concerns the Church Militant (*i.e. in foro externo*), unless it has been inflicted by a judge who had no canonical jurisdiction over him, or should be null from some other cause."[2]

S. Antoninus, then, plainly declares that a sentence of excommunication may be objectively unjust without being canonically invalid.[3] And common sense would seem to suggest that this must be so. Let the case be stated in general terms. A superior, whether entirely in good faith, or partly under the influence of passion or of misapprehension, imposes a command which the subject deems to be seriously mischievous. If the subject is sincerely convinced that such is its character, he cannot in conscience obey. But it does not follow that the superior must necessarily view the matter in the same light, or that he acts sinfully in insisting upon the execution of the command, or in imposing a penalty for its non-fulfilment. And if he does so it would seem that the sentence whereby the penalty is inflicted must be regarded as canonically valid. The conditions of nullity are clearly laid down by S. Antoninus, and among them the only one which could possibly be construed as bearing upon the case of Savonarola is that which is expressed in the sentence, "An excommunication is null . . . when it contains an intolerable

[1] "Et si me excommunicat (in casu) debeo accedere ad superiorem (ut petam) relaxationem . . . injusti præcepti" (In cap. *Inquisitioni, ut supra*).

[2] *Summa*, parte iii., tit. 24, c. 23.

[3] So, too, S. Thomas Aquinas, or his continuator. Speaking of an unjust sentence of excommunication he writes: "Si sit talis error ex parte sententiæ qui sententiam nullam esse faciat, non habet effectum, quia non est excommunicatio; si autem talis error non annullet sententiam habet effectum suum" (*Summa*, Suppl. q. xxi., a. 4).

error."[1] Whether the excommunication of Fra Girolamo could plausibly be said to contain, or involve, an "intolerable error," is a question that will come up for consideration in due course. But in the meanwhile we must take account of what might seem to be a more lenient view of the whole matter of unjust censures, which is now commonly, if not universally, held. For whereas S. Thomas and S. Antoninus, with others of the older canonists, when treating of censures which are objectively unjust, distinguish between those which are valid and those which are null, it is now maintained that in all cases in which no moral fault has been committed by the delinquent, the censure is of its own nature intrinsically invalid.[2] The apparent contradiction arises, however, rather from a difference in the point of view from which the subject is regarded, and in the terminology employed, than from any real divergence of judgment. When the older writers distinguish between a censure which, though objectively unjust, is yet juridically valid, they have in view the *forum externum;* and when the more recent writers maintain that in the absence of moral guilt the censure is always invalid, they are speaking

[1] S. Antoninus, *ibid.* Ballerini sums up the grounds of nullity in the words: "Invalida vero [est censura] quæ aut fertur a non habente potestatem, vel contra alicujus privilegium vel post legitimam appellationem, vel quando continet errorem intolerabilem." The plea of "privilege" cannot be urged against the Pope, for all ecclesiastical privileges in the strict sense of the term are revocable by him.

[2] "Denique excusatur a culpa [? a censura] qui vere innocens est: cum enim censura nemini imponi possit absque culpa, qui ab hac liber est erit etiam a censura liber" (Schmalzgrueber *Jus Canonicum*, lib. v., tit. 39, n. 80). After giving two other cases, which do not here concern us, the writer proceeds: "Potest contingere ut culpa quidem non adsit, probetur tamen adesse" (*i.e.* the alleged delinquent is morally innocent, either because he has not done the action charged against him, or because in doing it he followed the dictates of his own conscience); and in this case: "Dicendum probabilius in hoc casu innocentem censura non ligari." A long series of approved authors, from Cajetan to Castropalao, are cited as holding this opinion, as against certain older canonists; and then the grounds of the more lenient opinion are stated. "Ratio est quia præceptum illud judicis nititur falsa præsumptione obligationis et errore aperto: igitur cum alienum sit a benignitate ecclesiæ cogere et obligare sub censura ad solvendum tanquam debitum quod nullo modo est debitum, non est credendum ullam sic condemnato obligationem induci ex hoc præcepto" (*ibid.* n. 82). He goes on to insist that whatever obligation of outward observance may arise in such a case has its ground, not in the censure, which (*ex hypothesi*) is null, but in the natural law which prescribes the avoidance of scandal (*ibid.* n. 83). Ballerini (*Opus Morale*, vii. 43) adopts the language of Schmalzgrueber, and declares that his opinion is now commonly accepted.

of the *forum internum*.[1] So far as there is, or may be, a real divergence of opinion, it would touch only on the lawfulness of neglecting to observe, in private, the prohibitions involved in the censure.

But whatever the theoretical difference of opinion may or may not be as to the possible validity or invalidity of a sentence of excommunication which is objectively unjust, all are agreed that such a sentence must be "respected," in other words, that the prohibitions which it implies must be observed in public, unless the juridical invalidity of the sentence has been first made publicly known.[2] Now the invalidity of a sentence cannot be made publicly known if it depends simply on the dictates of the individual conscience, of which, from the nature of the case, the faithful at large can take no cognisance. Hence both those who assert, or appear to assert, that a censure may be valid, even though it be objectively unjust, and those who declare that a censure can not be valid when the alleged delinquent has been guilty of no moral fault, agree in saying that the obligation of external observance in public holds good unless the sentence can be publicly shown to be null, either in consequence of some legal flaw, or because it contains "an intolerable error."[3]

[1] That the two opinions are not really at variance (except possibly as regards private observance) appears from Ballerini (*Opus Morale*, tom. vii.), who in one place distinguishes between an unjust sentence of excommunication which is valid and one which is invalid (p. 166), while elsewhere he teaches that in the absence of moral fault a censure is necessarily invalid (p. 43). That the reconciliation of these apparently conflicting statements lies in the distinction between the *forum externum* and the *forum internum* appears clearly from Reiffenstuel (In 5 *Decr.*, tit. 39, n. 41). "Quamvis ille, qui vel absque ulla vere subsistente causa, consequenter penitus innocens, vel saltem absque sufficienti legitima causa, censuratur, v. g. excommunicatur, reipsa coram Deo, et in foro conscientiae censuram . . . non incurrat, nec effectibus illius subjaceat . . . nihilominus si secundum allegata et probata in judicio censetur nocens . . . debet censura in foro externo et in facie ecclesiæ tam a censurato quam ab aliis servari, donec vel ab ea praesumptus reus fuerit absolutus, vel innocentia ipsius atque error censurae publice innotuerit."

[2] "Ratio est," says Reiffenstuel, "tum quia in foro externo adest saltem casusa praesumpta; tum quia hoc necesse est ad publicam utilitatem et disciplinam, et . . . ad bonum publicum tuendum, cui bono bonum privatum merito postponi debet. Et certe si etiam in foro externo censura servari in tali casu non deberet, malevolis lata aperiretur porta, quaslibet censuras contemnendi; cum dicere possent, se coram Deo esse innocentes," etc. (*loc. cit.*, n. 42). If the alleged acquittal of one's own conscience were a sufficient bar against all ecclesiastical censures even *in foro externo*, the *forum externum* might as well suspend business altogether.

[3] The older school would say: You must obey because the censure is valid (meaning, *in foro externo*). The more modern school would say: You must

But what is it, the reader may not unnecessarily ask, that constitutes, in the technical sense, "an intolerable error"? If a private individual or subordinate official is ordered under pain of excommunication to do something which his ecclesiastical superior declares to be for the good of the Church, but which he deems mischievous, it is obvious that there arises a conflict of opinion between the superior and the subject as to the reasonableness of the command; and it is equally obvious that the presumption is in favour of the superior. Nor can any degree of earnestness or eloquence on the part of the subject avail to show that in the canonical sense of the term the superior is "intolerably" mistaken, unless, in the words of Innocent IV., he can make it clear that what is commanded is of such a character as to be "commonly or of its own nature (ex genere suo) sinful," or again, that it is physically or morally impossible.[1] In other words, he must be able to bring the case clearly and unmistakably under some general principle universally or at least commonly accepted. Unless he can do this the question remains a matter of opinion; the superior is to be presumed to command what is reasonable, and while it is recognised that he may be mistaken, it must also be recognised that his error is not of that kind which can rightly be described as "intolerable."

We have set forth at some length the principles laid down by distinguished canonists both of the fifteenth century and of more modern times with reference to (1) the duty of a subject when commanded to do something which is either plainly and palpably wrong, or is opposed to the dictates of his own individual conscience; (2) the validity or nullity of an ecclesiastical censure imposed in such a case as the penalty of disobedience; and (3) the duty of externally observing the prohibitions involved in the censure, so long as its nullity (if indeed it be null) cannot be, or has not been, made publicly known. We have now to apply these principles to the case and the conduct of Fra Girolamo. And in doing so we shall

obey, because, though the censure is really null (meaning, *in foro interno*), you must behave as if it were valid; and this on general grounds of public utility, and of the duty of observing law and order and of avoiding scandal (Schmalzgrueber, *loc. cit.*).

[1] "Utpote si asseritur in excommunicationis sententia intolerabilem errorem fuisse patenter expressum, id est aliquid sub vi praecepti vel mandati aperte in ea contineri quod communiter vel in suo genere est peccatum, velut si dicat forte aliquis se . . . excommunicatum . . . quia non operabatur id quod suo actu illicitum est et pravum" (Cap. 7, *Venerabilibus;* 6 *Decr.* tit. xi., § 5).

avail ourselves not only of the letters written by Savonarola in response to the Brief *Cum sæpe*, but also of the *Apologeticum Fratrum S. Marci*, which has been summarised in a former chapter, and of the Apology for Fra Girolamo adressed to Ercole d'Este (much to the distress of that prince) by Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola in the winter of 1497-98.[1]

The precept whereby Savonarola was commanded to merge the Convent of S. Marco and the houses attached to it in the newly-erected Congregation of his Order was obviously one which *per se* fell entirely within the competence of the Pope's authority. The Congregation of S. Marco, as has been said, owed its canonical erection to a papal Brief; and a papal Brief could annul what a papal Brief had enacted. Moreover, there was more than one *prima facie* reason for the new arrangement. The multiplication of subordinate jurisdictions within the Order might, as has been said, reasonably be deemed undesirable; and the arguments which had militated in favour of the separation of S. Marco a few years previously might seem to be overborne by the advantages to be gained by merging S. Marco and its dependencies in a more general scheme of reform. These are not merely imaginary considerations, but are the points alleged as the ostensible motives of the scheme of reform in the *Apologeticum Fratrum S. Marci*. We have already seen that the writer of the *Apologeticum* is at great pains to show that these reasons are fallacious. But whatever may be thought of the value of his arguments, with their calm assumption of superiority on the part of the brethren of S. Marco, it can hardly be said that the *Apologeticum* raises the question above the level of a matter of opinion, or that it convincingly shows the project of union to be intrinsically wrong ("ex suo genere malum") or contrary to any divine or natural law. And it is of interest to note that in Savonarola's own days a project very similar to that which was now in hand on behalf of the Dominican convents of Rome and Tuscany had actually been carried out in a considerable number of the Benedictine monasteries of Italy. The reformed congregation of Santa Giustina at Padua had not only sent out a number of offshoots, viz. to Bassano, Verona, Genoa, Pavia, and Milan, but had also effected, by means of monks sent out for that purpose, the reform of many other houses of the Order, viz. at or

[1] These two documents are given in Quétif, ii. 74 *sqq.* and 3 *sqq.*

near Rome, Naples, Perugia, Piacenza, Bologna, Modena, Mantua, Milan, and Venice.[1]

Moreover, apart from the balance of intrinsic reasons for and against the scheme, it must be remembered that the authority which Savonarola declined to obey was not merely that of Alexander VI., who might perhaps have been reasonably suspected of acting from sinister motives, but also that of the General of the Order, Torriano, and of the newly appointed vicar, Cardinal Caraffa, neither of whom could fairly be charged either with malicious designs against Fra Girolamo and his brethren, or with ignorance of the circumstances.

Whether, then, the project was well or ill conceived, it was not one on which the faithful at large could reasonably be invited to form a judgment; and the appeal to a popular verdict, which Savonarola, as has been seen, allowed himself to make, was an act of insubordination which objectively at least cannot be justified. The circumstances of the case were no doubt full of difficulty. Assuming that Savonarola was convinced that the mandate could not be obeyed without sin, he acted rightly in withholding his obedience. And in as much as he occupied a public position, and his disobedience could not fail to be generally known, it was right that he should give, in public, some account of his reasons for thus acting. But in the giving of this account of his reasons, he would have done well to remember that in the case of a conflict of opinions the presumption, to say the very least, is in favour of the ecclesiastical superior; and that nothing further could rightly be demanded of his hearers than that they should give him credit for having acted in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience—not that they should pass judgment as between him and the Pope, or should condemn the action of the authorities of his own Order.

So far as regards the duty of obedience, or the reverse, to the original command. Now, as regards the excommunication. The precept being in the eyes of the ecclesiastical law, and of the faithful at large, of a perfectly legitimate character, the censure for its non-fulfilment could not, by the very nature of the case, be shown to be canonically null, and therefore ought to have been observed at least

[1] Pastor, *History*, v. 173 *sqq.*, who refers to a series of articles in *Der Katholik* (1859-60) which we have not been able to consult. A high encomium is passed on the Congregation of S. Justina by Felix Faber or Fabri in his *Evagatorium* (Ed. Hassler, in the *Bibliolthek d. liter. Vereins in Stuttgart*), iii. 393. He calls the monks of this congregation "forma et exemplar omnium religiosorum."

in public. And here we must remark that Savonarola was not altogether happy in his citation of authorities. He first quotes Paludanus, but by the opportune omission of several sentences he makes that author assert of every unjust excommunication what he actually affirms of those only which are, in his opinion, juridically invalid.[1] There is no need to discuss the question whether Paludanus is theoretically right in drawing the distinction; he at least ought not to have been quoted as if he had not drawn it. Still less is Savonarola justified in ascribing to S. Antoninus the whole of what he himself has taken, or professes to have taken, from Paludanus. S. Antoninus gives only the concluding sentences of the paragraph from de Palude; and for the rest he treats the question independently, and much more fully.

Even Gerson, when he lays down that in many cases the Pope may lawfully be disobeyed, defines or describes such cases as those in which he "scandalously, and beyond all measure, abuses his power" to the detriment of the Church;[2] and it is difficult to see how the command to submit in the affair of the Congregation could be brought under this description. When Gerson speaks of a scandalous abuse of power it may be assumed that he means just what other canonists express when they speak of an ecclesiastical censure as involving "an intolerable error." And it is, in fact, precisely upon this expression that Pico della Mirandola takes his stand in his Apology for Fra Girolamo. Among the various causes of nullity in the case of an excommunication, he writes, we must select that which is described as an intolerable error.[3] And an intolerable error, he goes on to say, is certainly involved when the penalty is inflicted for failure to obey a precept, the execution of which would be of its

[1] "Quantum ad tertium, quod excommunicatio est timenda, sunt duæ conclusiones. Et prima quod [? quoad] ly 'sit injusta est tamen timenda': *si sic sit injusta quod non est nulla*, sed solum annullanda . . . *timenda est et propter culpam et propter pœnam.* . . . Et secunda conclusio est quod *si est injusta quia est ipso jure nulla . . . propter pœnam juris timenda non est*," etc. (Palud., *in* 4 *Sent.*, D. xviii. q. 1, ad 3m). Whatever may be the obscurities of this passage, the distinction between the two cases is carefully drawn. But this distinction is entirely eliminated when Savonarola makes Paludanus say, simply: "Excommunicatio injusta propter pœnam juris timenda non est," etc. Luotto gives the passage just as it is quoted (or rather misquoted) by Savonarola.

[2] "Contemptus clavium non incurritur in multis casibus quibus Papæ mandato non obediretur; dum scilicet abutitur enormissime et scandalosissime potestate sua in destructionem, non in ædificationem" (*Circa materiam Excom.*, etc., n. 9).

[3] *Apologia*, lib. i. cap. 3; Quétif, ii. 13.

very nature sinful, or again impossible. And, as if half conscious of the weakness of his attempt to prove that it would have been sinful to obey, he lays very particular stress on the impossibility of carrying out the Pope's command.[1] How, he asks, could Fra Girolamo, an alien by birth, compel a number of Florentine youths to allow themselves to be amalgamated against their will with the new Congregation? To this it is obvious to reply that it was not impossible for Fra Girolamo to do what he could to further the design; and that it would have been time to speak of impossibility after an effort had been made and had failed.

But we have not quite done with Gerson. The real canonical ground of Savonarola's failure to obey, so far as it is possible to assign a plausible one, is to be found in the statement boldly made by that writer, that the opinion of a single canonist or theologian to the effect that a particular censure is unjust, may be considered a sufficient reason for disregarding that censure. And here his words would seem to bear directly on the matter of the excommunication rather than on that of the original precept. Pico della Mirandola was not slow to urge this point in Savonarola's favour. If, he says, the opinion of a single canonist or theologian is sufficient in such a case, how much more that of a whole community of learned and fervent religious men?[2] But on this point Gerson's position is an extreme one, and cannot be said to have gained general acceptance even in the fifteenth century. Bellarmine, in his reply to Gerson's tract, makes the obvious remark that the view here expressed by that distinguished writer is subversive of all good government, for in how many cases of excommunication for contumacy would it not be possible to find "one canonist or theologian" who should declare that the sentence was unjust? Bellarmine, it is true, wrote his answer to Gerson a century later, and in the fuller light of the disciplinary decrees of the Council of Trent; but his strictures on this particular paragraph might equally well have been penned by an author writing in 1497.

However, Savonarola evidently believed, or persuaded himself, that the authority of Gerson was sufficient for his purpose, and to this extent he may be acquitted of conscious insubordination. That he was mistaken is our firm conviction, for which we have already given our reasons. That the mistake was one from which a deeper and more thorough humility would have saved him we are disposed

[1] *Apologia*, Lib. ii., cap. 4; Quétif, ii. 33.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

to believe. An invincibly erroneous conscience is as imperative in its demands as a conscience that is well informed. But, as the Canonists remind us when treating of this matter, not every erroneous conscience is "invincibly" mistaken. An erroneous conscience, they tell us, may ordinarily be corrected if the right means are taken. Of these, the most obvious is a readiness to believe that a man is usually not a good judge in his own cause, and that even those who act with the best of intentions are liable to be mistaken; and—still more important—a readiness to apply these very general maxims to one's own particular case.

We have already more than once insisted that it was not Alexander alone who was concerned in the project of union, but that it had the warm support of Torriano and Caraffa also. But there is a special reason why we should again call attention to this circumstance. The present writer has been severely taken to task for not having adequately recognised the merits of the Lombard Provincial, the Blessed Sebastian Maggi, of whose virtues a list has been drawn up for his special instruction. Yet this was the man whom, in 1495, Savonarola described as entirely unfit to be appointed judge of his cause ("judicem merito suspectum"). And when the Pope, after having yielded to his objections on the former occasion, puts him under obedience to Caraffa instead, Fra Girolamo, as appears from the letters which we have quoted, simply ignores the claims of the Cardinal, and the wishes of his own General, and makes no allusion whatever to them, as if they had no *locus standi* in the matter.

Again, in speaking of the Pope's alleged misinformation, Savonarola again and again insists upon the soundness of his doctrine, as if this were the point upon which the validity or invalidity of the excommunication turned. But surely Fra Girolamo ought to have been aware that the excommunication was inflicted, not for unsound doctrine, but purely and simply for disobedience. That he had taught unsound doctrine was indeed alleged in the proem of the Brief; but Savonarola was as capable as any modern student of Canon Law of distinguishing between the motive and the enacting clauses of a Papal document. To confound them, was merely to throw dust in his own eyes, and in that of those to whom his letters and his later sermons were addressed.

We cannot, then, admit that Savonarola was objectively justified in the resistance which he opposed not merely to Alexander VI.,

but to the superiors of his own Order, or in his public disregard of the excommunication as invalid; nor can we profess to be convinced that his conduct in the matter was entirely blameless; though we are disposed to think that the fault is to be looked for rather at the outset of his career than at this particular crisis of affairs. And in as much as nothing more powerfully contributed to confirm him in the position which he now held than the initial conviction that he held a special divine mission, and was the recipient of special revelations, it seems to us that this chapter of his life is enough to throw the gravest doubts upon the genuineness of the claim, which he now more than ever emphatically put forth, to be regarded as a man sent by God to the city of Florence, and charged to deliver a message to all the world from the vantage-ground of that watch-tower of Italy.

CHAPTER XIII

THE LONG SILENCE

AFTER Ascension Day, 4th May 1497, Savonarola did not again appear in the pulpit until the February of the following year. That he kept silence so long was not, as he more than once explained, because he deemed himself bound to respect, even in public, the sentence of excommunication—though he admits, what is very much to his credit, that he deemed it well for a time to have regard for the scruples (as he regarded them) of timid souls.[1] But, in fact, during the summer months all preaching, as has been seen, had been inhibited by reason of the plague then raging; and after the plague had abated, it was perhaps felt that any public appearance on the part of Fra Girolamo would only have the effect of frustrating the efforts of a friendly government on his behalf. For throughout the latter half of the year, from July to December, and again in January and February 1498, the successive Signories were composed for the most part of supporters of the Friar. That this was so must be attributed to several causes. In June and July the Palleschi, or Bigi, disappointed by the failure of Piero's recent attempt to enter the city, and irritated by the contemptuous hostility of the Arrabbiati, were again following their old policy of joining their forces with the Frateschi, and thus secured an electoral victory for the latter.[2] In August came the discovery of that Medicean plot, mentioned in a former article, in which Bernardo del Nero had unfortunately allowed himself to be at least indirectly implicated. And the severe blow which was struck at the party by the execution of Bernardo and his fellow-conspirators, though it prepared the way for future reprisals, was calculated for the present at least to disarm opposition from that quarter. Moreover, the vague alarms excited by the

[1] "Ho osservato qualche ceremonia di fuori per rispetto ai pusilli" (Sermon on Sexagesima Sunday 1498).

[2] Somenzi to Sforza, 29th June (summarised below).

"startling revelations" of the trial of the conspirators served to strengthen the hands of the popular party, and were no doubt exploited for that purpose.[1]

There was, however, apart from politics, a more satisfactory reason for the revival of Fra Girolamo's personal popularity at this time. The prevalence of the plague had served to bring into evidence his best qualities. On 9th July the younger members of the community of S. Marco were sent out of Florence to avoid the infection, but Savonarola himself, with a number of his brethren, remained behind in the city, and gave themselves with the utmost self-devotion to the service of the sick. This season of silence and of charitable labours was also marked by considerable literary activity. Besides the *Triumph of the Cross*, he published at this time a number of minor ascetical treatises, chiefly in the form of letters to those who sought his advice. And in addition to the letters which he himself published, there are extant a considerable number addressed to private friends, which have been since printed in the various collections of *Savonaroliana*. Of these, several were written in the latter half of 1497, and the substance of some of them will be given below.

Returning for a moment to the political condition of Florence, in its bearing on the fate of Savonarola, it is to be observed that, immediately on the entrance of the new government into office in July, the Signory no longer left the duty of corresponding with the Florentine envoys at Rome in the hands of the Ten, but repeatedly and most urgently wrote on their own account in order by all means to secure, if possible, the revocation of the censure inflicted on Fra Girolamo.

One more event must be here referred to in order that the series of documents which is to follow may be made intelligible. On 19th June, the day after the solemn publication of the Brief *Cum sæpe*, news reached Florence of the brutal murder, in Rome, of the Pope's eldest son, Piero Borgia, Duke of Gandia. Suspicion fell on various distinguished personages, but the author of the crime was never discovered. The blow was a terrible one to the Pope, and so deeply was he affected by it that it really seemed for awhile as if

[1] On 1st September, Manfredi, after recording that the new Signory "sono tutti delli divoti et inclinati a fra Hieronymo," goes on to say that he has been assured by "a person worthy of credit and of very great authority" "che è cosa stupendissima intendere le pratiche che se maneggiavano a malefitio et ruina de questa meschina città" (Cappelli, n. 128).

he were seriously determined to reform his own life, and to purge his court of its manifold abuses.[1] Perhaps the most remarkable item in the correspondence of this period is the letter which on 25th June Savonarola wrote to the Pope to console him in his affliction. It will be found in its place below.

In resuming our calendar of contemporary documents, we take it up at the period where it was interrupted (20th May), after the issue of the Brief, *Cum sæpe*, but previous to its publication at Florence.

23rd May; Savonarola to Lodovico Pittorio.[2]—The patience of God in dealing with sinners shows His great goodness, and in the patience of His elect is shown the power of His grace. If there were no bad men on earth, how could there be persecutions? And if persecutions were wanting, where would be the patience and the proof of the saints? And where, then, would be their crown? Study the Old and the New Testament, and you will see that the saints have had to endure greater persecutions than these. And I warn you beforehand that we, too, shall have to endure greater persecutions than these. "Hoc ergo locutus sum vobis, ut cum venerit hora eorum, reminiscamini quia ego dixi vobis." If the tribulations which we have predicted seem not to come so quickly, be not deceived, for God hath disposed all things sweetly. They will come without doubt, and will be only too evident to those who experience them. Jeremiah foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, during a space of forty years, and all that time patiently endured the ridicule to which he was daily exposed. Our Lord foretold the second destruction of the city more than forty years beforehand, and the wicked did not believe Him; and yet the destruction came. Great tribulations are always predicted many years before they come. Yet I do not say that the tribulations which I have foretold will be so long in coming; nay, they will come soon; indeed I say that the tribulation has already commenced. For the rest, to desire such chastisement, and even the punishment of an individual sinner, for the general good of the Church, or for the salvation of some one in particular, is not hatred, but a laudable zeal, which—if it be "secundum scientiam"—is pleasing in the sight of God. Leave him to act; He will not suffer one of His elect to perish. Our affairs here go on well, and prosper in the midst of tribulation. Pray for me, and commend me to Signor Messer Hercule (d'Este).

[1] "El Papa in su questo caso dimonstrò essersi molto risentito, et in tutto disposto ad volere mutare vita, et essere un altro homo da quello è stato. . . . Preterea heri in consistorio dixe de volere reformare la chiesa nel temporale et spirituale, et ad questo effecto elesse VI. cardinali che havessero ad veder le cose reformande," etc. (Letter to Giovanni Bentivoglio, Rome, 20th June, given by Pastor, v. 554).

[2] Gherardi, p. 279. Pittorio was chancellor to d'Este.

27th May; Bracci to the Ten.[1] — The Pope has said that Fra Girolamo will not confess to having spoken ill of his Holiness, which after all is not to be wondered at, seeing how strongly the Friar is supported by your Lordships (veduto quanto epse se li monstrano affetionate). But his Holiness is just as certain that Savonarola has spoken ill of him as he is that he is Pope; for he has it on the testimony of so many trustworthy witnesses. He is astonished that you should think him capable of acting in this matter without good and sufficient grounds. For the present he would say no more than that he awaits the reply of the Signory to his Brief.[2] Then he asked me if I knew whether Camerino had yet arrived. I said I knew nothing about it; but I spoke strongly on behalf of the Friar, and besought H. H. to proceed in the matter with gravity and mature deliberation; reminding him that any unjust proceedings against Fra Girolamo could not fail to cause a disturbance in the city. I dwelt upon the very great affection and devotion with which he is universally regarded by all the people, on account of his marvellous learning, the integrity of his life, and the wonderful fruits of moral reformation which he has produced. To this H. H. made no answer. But I think that if the Signory would write a suitable letter to the Pope, all might yet be well. I have done my best with Perugia and the Bishop of Capaccio, who now seem well disposed. In the Cardinal of Naples I place little trust; but I will do my best with him.

29th May; Becchi to the Ten.[3]—Letters are continually received here, to the great joy of our enemies, concerning the divisions in the city, and every one knows who is for the Friar, and who against him; and the Milanese Ambassador is said to have a list of names, etc.; and all the dissensions among the Signory and the Eight are fully reported, to the dishonour of the city.

30th May; Same to same.[4]—Has had a long talk with Caraffa, who professes to have known nothing of the Brief till after it was sent; and says that the Pope kept it quite a secret; and that afterwards he repented of having despatched it, and especially of having done so by Camerino, when he learned that this person was an enemy of the city and of Fra Girolamo. I told him that your Lordships had heard of the Brief by letters from here; but that I had not yet heard of Camerino's arrival at Florence. The Cardinal said: If he is wise, he never will arrive there. Some other means, he added, must be taken to bring Fra G. to obedience. In a word, the Friar, he said, had brought discord

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[1] Gherardi, p. 164.

[2] From this source alone we learn that a copy of the Brief was sent to the Signory as such. Possibly the whole batch of copies, addressed to the various monasteries and convents of the city, were to be handed over to the Signory in the first instance, for delivery at their respective destinations.

[3] Gherardi, p. 166.

[4] *Ibid.*

into the city, and something must be done. I said it was not the Friar, but his enemies, who had brought discord into the city, and had procured this Brief. *A propos* of this he assured me that only yesterday the Cardinal de' Medici had spoken highly of Savonarola, and he declared that Piero made no complaint against him. For all this, I assure you once more that it was the Cardinal himself who procured the Brief. And its real author was no other than his Paternity Fra Mariano. And as for Piero's attempt to enter the city, I warn you that many letters have passed to and fro under the mantles of these Friars.[1]

5*th June;* the Ten to Bracci.[2]—As far as we can learn, the Signory have not yet received any Brief concerning Fra G. Perhaps Camerino has changed his mind about coming, knowing what sort of a letter he has in charge (sappiendo il breve ha a collo). The Signory will certainly reply to the Pope with great modesty and reverence, and you must do your utmost to gain the good offices of Perugia and Capaccio, promising and giving every assurance that Fra G. will ever be most obedient and respectful (obsequentissimo et devotissimo) towards the Holy See. Do what you can also with the Cardinal of Naples.

14*th June;* Bracci to the Ten.[3]—Fra G. having written to the Pope and also to Perugia to justify himself, it appears to me, according to what I can learn from Perugia and Capaccio, who are now become his firm friends, that the letters in question have greatly mitigated the anger of H. H. (habbino giovato assai et mitigato N.S.).[4] But the Cardinal of Naples, by reason of his being the Protector of the Order, and because the General and the Procurator are always about him, has taken the business a good deal to heart (ha presa questa cosa un pocho co' denti). Accordingly, Bracci and I have had an interview with his most reverend Lordship, and we trust that we have to some extent talked him over (lo habbiamo combattuto assai et ridoctolo, pure alfine, ad migliore collera). Becchi will give further details.[5]

16*th June;* Camerino to the Signory.[6]—Although I am commissioned and ordered by his Holiness to present myself to your Lordships on certain important business, nevertheless, I am informed on good authority that I cannot do so without danger to my life, because some time ago the Eight put me under ban. The ground of this was that, solely out of

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[1] Becchi's grammar seems to be a little at fault here. We have paraphrased freely. His words are: "Dixivi, per altra mia, chi haveva sollecitati decti brevi. Confermovi el medesimo; et addo unum, che è suto capo et auctore di questa cosa: et questo è el padre Generale fra Mariano. Et, perdonimi sua Paternità, anchora in questa venuta non s'è stato; et molte lectere sono ite et venute sotto le loro cappe, etc."

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 167.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] This must refer to Savonarola's letter of 22nd May.

[5] Becchi's letter on this occasion has not been preserved.

[6] Gherardi p. 168.

zeal for the faith, I had publicly spoken against the false teaching of Fra G. of Ferrara. A strange thing, surely, that the Eight should concern themselves about matters of faith and doctrine. However, I beg of your Lordships to send me a safe-conduct for the remainder of this present month, etc.

This is the last letter previous to the publication of the Brief. It is to be presumed that Camerino got his safe-conduct.

22nd June; Becchi to the Ten.—The writer and Bracci are greatly distressed at having received no news from Florence. Contradictory rumours have reached them concerning the Friar. They can do nothing, and no one will attend to them unless they have instructions. The Pope has put everything, including the affairs of Fra G., in the hands of the six Cardinals who are on the Commission of Reform. Great hopes are entertained that the appointment of this Commission will have salutary results, if only the Pope will persevere in his good purposes. If he does so, the prediction of Fra G. will be fulfilled, viz. that the Church is to be reformed with the sword, etc.

The appointment of this Commission of Reform was the immediate result of the Pope's temporary access of remorse after the murder of his son, the Duke of Gandia. At its head were the Cardinals of Naples (Caraffa) and of Lisbon (da Costa), and among its subordinate members were the Bishop of Capaccio and the Canonist, Felino Sandeo.[1]

25th June; Savonarola to Alexander VI.[2] — Faith, most Holy Father, is the one and only true source of peace and consolation for the heart of man. For whereas it transcends both sense and reason, and rests upon the power and goodness of God, lifting up the soul to invisible things, it makes us to be no longer in this world, and confers upon us that greatness of soul whereby we not only endure all adversity, but even glory in our tribulations. . . . Blessed, therefore, is he who is called by our Lord to this grace of faith, without which no one can have peace. . . . Let your Holiness, then, respond to this call, and you will see how quickly sadness is turned to joy. . . .[3] All other consolation is trivial and deceitful. . . . Faith alone brings joy from our far-off country (a terra longinqua). What I have heard, and

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[1] "VI. Cardinali, li quali furno duy primi vescovi cardinali [Napoli et Ulixbona, *sic*] . . . duy primi preti . . . duy primi diaconi . . . duy auditori de Rota [Felino et G. de Pereriis], et lo vescovo de Capazo suo secretario" (Letter to Bentivoglio *ut supra*).

[2] Perrens, p. 364.

[3] We venture to supply what seems to be a gap in the text. The words "huic vocationi, et videbit," or their equivalent, are not read in the letter as given by Perrens.

have seen with my eyes, and have handled, that I speak; and for this I willingly suffer persecution that I may gain Christ and avoid eternal pains. . . . Let your Holiness then help forward the work of faith for which I labour even unto bonds, and do not give ear to the wicked; then shall God give you the oil of gladness for the spirit of grief. For the things which I have predicted are true. But who has ever resisted God and yet found peace? These things, most holy Father I have written to you (for a few words are enough for a wise man) under the prompting of charity and in all humility; desiring that your Holiness may find in God that true comfort which does not deceive. . . . May He . . . console you in your distress. Vale." [1]

25th June; Costabili to d'Este.[2]—This morning the Duke (Sforza) published in his court the news that Fra Girolamo has been publicly declared excommunicate in four churches of Florence; and that, on the following day, deeming the excommunication null, he and all his brethren celebrated Mass. Thereafter, by the Duke's command, a letter was read in which Fra G. proves that the excommunication may be disregarded. And although to many men of good position (homini da bene), and to me also, it appears that the Friar has given excellent and holy reasons (bonissime et sante rasone, *sic*), nevertheless, the Duke, and some few of his courtiers (alcuni puochi assentatori) declared that they had never heard anything so absurd. The Duke gave me to understand that he addressed his remarks in particular to me, and rallied me about the prophecies in which I had invited him to believe. After he had gone on in this fashion for a while I could contain myself no longer, and broke out in defence of the reasons alleged by Fra Girolamo, and Mastro Vincenzo, who was present, could not deny that the Friar had good grounds to go upon. And while we were in the middle of this dispute, the Florentine Ambassador came in, to whom I forthwith resigned the conduct of the defence. And although the other ambassadors and the Duke were all down upon him (siano stati tutti adosso), he was at no loss for an answer, and I can assure your Highness that they fought out the question with considerable vigour (l'uno l'altro si hanno datto per le cinge uno pezo). At last the Duke dismissed the Florentine and myself, and remained in consultation with the rest. I will take care to keep you informed of all that I can learn.

27th June; Bracci to the Ten.[3]—Has been to the Pope to beg him

[1] It is almost incredible that Villari (ii. 38) should have made the mistake of saying that at a later period Alexander expressed indignation at this very letter. When the Pope, as Bonsi reports in a letter to the Ten, dated 7th March 1498, complained that Savonarola "li rimproverava la morte del figliuolo" (Marchese, n. 20), he obviously alluded, not to the letter of eight months previously, but to a stinging passage in Fra Girolamo's sermon on Sexagesima Sunday, only a few days before Bonsi's audience.

[2] Villari, ii. Append. p. xli. Antonio Costabili was d'Este's ambassador at Milan.

[3] Gherardi, p. 171.

to withdraw the censure. He would have easily (!) prevailed, but for certain private letters which have since arrived, and which have spoiled everything. For whereas at first his Holiness declared to Perugia that the publication of the Brief at such a time displeased him greatly, and was altogether contrary to his intentions (!), he afterwards changed his mind, and turned over the whole affair to the Commission of Reform. Notwithstanding this, I should at least have obtained a suspension of the censure but for some fresh communications which arrived later still. The result of these was that yesterday the Pope summoned me, and after calling God to witness that he had begun to be well-disposed towards Fra G., and after praising him for certain letters which he had received from him,[1] told us that he had seen another epistle of his, a formal document issued subsequently to the excommunication, which had determined him to proceed against the Friar with all the rigours of the Canon Law; and on this topic he spoke in a very passionate manner.[2] Moreover, he had heard that the Friar, being excommunicate, had celebrated the Mass of the Holy Ghost. After this he began to speak on politics; but concluded by telling Paolo Rucellai and Niccolò Cattani, who were present, to thank Jacopo de' Nerli for his good offices in opposing the Friar.[3]

29th June; Somenzi to Sforza.[4]—Sends the names of the new Signory, who, contrary to his hopes and expectations, are for the most part friendly to the Friar. So he probably will not be expelled the city, even though the Pope has excommunicated him. Things are going from bad to worse (*i.e.* from a Milanese point of view), and it seems as if the Frateschi were going to have things all their own way; and this is because the friends of Piero (quali si chiamano li Bisi, *sic*) have made common cause with them; and this again is because "li Disperati" (*i.e.* the Arrabbiati) thoroughly frightened the "Bisi" on the occasion of Piero's fiasco, and were like to have cut off all their heads. Wherefore, the Greys, who before were disposed to join with the enemies of the Friar, have now gone over to his side, and no one can foresee the end of these dissensions.

2nd July; The Signory to Bracci.[5]—They have received his report that the Pope has committed the case of Fra Girolamo to the six Cardinals. They thank him for his good offices, and exhort him to persevere.

This very brief letter is of interest only as emanating from the

[1] Probably those of 22nd May and of 25th June (*supra*).

[2] This letter of Savonarola's, which aroused the anger of the Pope, was, of course, the *Epistola . . . contra Excommunicationem subreptitiam* summarised in the foregoing chapter.

[3] Nerli was one of the chiefs of the aristocratic party (Guicciardini, *Storia Fiorentina*, p. 140).

[4] Villari, ii. Append. p. xxix.

[5] Marchese, n. 5.

newly appointed Signory, composed, as has been said, of supporters of Fra Girolamo.

On 5th July was held a Pratica at which the following question was put :—

"The Magnificent Signory, bearing in mind the excommunication issued by the Supreme Pontiff against Fra Girolamo di S. Marco, seeks advice as to what is to be done in respect of the said excommunication ; and whether it is advisable to write to the Pope in his favour . . . or the contrary."[1]

The voting, or rather the speaking, is by *panchate* (*sic*) or benches, each bench or order of the magistracy expressing its opinions—unanimous or discordant as the case might be—by means of one or two spokesmen. The speakers report a majority as in favour of a letter being written by the Signory as proposed, but a considerable minority prefer to leave the matter to the discretion of their magnificent lordships. It is noteworthy that much solicitude is expressed, not merely for Savonarola himself, but also for the city, lest it should suffer through his excommunication. One speaker, Lorenzo de' Lenzi, expresses himself more cordially than the rest. If the city gives offence to God, he says, it cannot hope to prosper. And if the Signory has more than once addressed the Holy See on behalf of other citizens who have been excommunicate, how much more so should they do this for a father and a religious who has preserved the city, and maintained it, and corrected its vices. On the other hand Guidantonio Vespucci, who was no friend to the Friar, after reporting the opinion of his colleagues, added, on his own account (as the reporter is careful to note), that it would be well to enquire by whom this matter was set on foot, whether by citizens or by religious ; because, if this were ascertained, it would be easier to find a remedy for the mischief.[2] The result of the debate was the following letter.

8th July ; The Signory to Alexander VI.[3]—Past experience does not permit us to doubt of the good dispositions of your Holiness towards us and the city ; wherefore we have the greater hopes of obtaining what we

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[1] The minutes of this and other debates bearing on the case of Savonarola have been published by Lupi in the *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Terza Serie, iii. 25 *sqq*.

[2] "Et è bene di vedere donde è sollicitata questa cosa, o da' cictadini o relligiosi, perchè, intesa la cosa, si può meglio medicare, *et hoc ultimum dixit ex seipso*," etc. (Lupi, p. 27).

[3] Marchese, n. 7.

now ask for. We are greatly distressed that Fra G. of Ferrara has incurred an ecclesiastical censure, both because our reverence for the Holy See makes any such censure, inflicted upon any of our citizens, a matter of deep concern to us, and also because we are displeased that a man of such signal virtue should have been wrongfully accused to your Holiness. He has lived some years in our city, earnestly engaged in the ministry of preaching; and his manner of life and his doctrine are alike free from reproach. But eminent virtue, as you know, never fails to excite envy. There are those among us who think to distinguish themselves by finding fault with him. Their error is pardonable, but it ought not to be confirmed by a sentence in accordance with their wishes.[1] In a word, your Holiness can do nothing that will give us greater pleasure than to withdraw the excommunication.

8th July; The Brethren of S. Marco to the Pope.[2]—We heard, since the despatch of our last letter to your Holiness (*i.e.* the *Apologeticum*) that certain of our citizens, who have but little fear of God, have sent to your Holiness misleading and exasperating reports concerning our father, Fra Hieronymo, alleging that his doctrine is contrary to that of the Gospel, and that his residence here is the ruin of the city. Wherefore, it has seemed good to us, in the interests of the truth, to write to your Holiness to bear witness to the soundness of his doctrine, and to assure you that it has been the salvation of the city, which would be blessed indeed if all its inhabitants observed those counsels of good conduct and of peace which he so ceaselessly urges upon them. We are more than 250 in number, for the most part natives of Florence, and intimately conversant with him. And being as we are men of some education and experience, it is not to be supposed that we should thus defend and uphold one who is an alien by birth unless we were well assured concerning his life and conduct. We see plainly that the hand of God is with him, as is proved by the number of conversions that he has made and continually makes. And lest our testimony should not be held sufficient, we have procured that a large number of our fellow-citizens should send their attestation with ours. And if your Holiness should wish it, we are ready to send up not merely many hundreds, but thousands of names. We beseech you, therefore, to deign to revoke the censures passed on Fra Girolamo, and to second his work, whereby you will acquire merit with God, and will do a thing most pleasing to this city, and especially to those who wish to live a good life. (Signed by all the Brethren.)

8th July; Certain Florentine Citizens to the Pope (to accompany the

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[1] This we suppose to be the meaning of the words: "Quibus magis venia danda quam graviore aliquo periculo id vindicare erroris."

[2] Villari, ii. Append. p. xlii. This is undated, but was obviously written before, yet not much before, 9th July. (*See* the summary of the Pratica held on that day.)

above).[1]—We, the undersigned, wish to add our testimony to what the reverend fathers have said. It is the undoubted truth that the teaching of Fra Hieronymo has been, not to the destruction of our city, but to its great profit and peace. We pray your Holiness to withdraw the censure conformably to the humble petition of the fathers. If you will do this (per la sua solita clemenzia) we are certain that you will thereby promote the glory of God, and your own honour, and the welfare spiritual and corporal and the true peace and union of this city, which is yours as it is ours.

On 9th July a Pratica was held relative to the "subscription," or joint letter, summarised above.[2] It was deemed unconstitutional for private citizens to address themselves to any foreign power concerning the internal affairs of the city. The joint letter, it might be pretended, came under this standing prohibition. Hence the need of caution, and of a debate in Council.

One speaker (Altoviti) says the facts and circumstances must be looked into, and if a fault has been committed it must be punished. Another (B. Ridolfi) declares that a testimonial in defence of the good name of a fellow-citizen does not fall under any prohibition. A third (Gualterotti) is of the same opinion, but thinks that if it be found that an offence has been committed against the common weal, it should be punished. Vespucci thinks no good will come of allowing such a list of names to go to Rome. It will reveal our dissensions; those Roman prelates will not fail, if they can, to make money out of it; the Pope may perchance excommunicate all the signatories; and an interdict of the whole city—if it should come—is an expensive matter, as past experience has shown. Let the Signory keep back the documents; as for punishment, let them use their discretion. G. Mannelli reminds their Lordships that mischief often wears a fair cloak (queste cose sempre si covertano di colore giusto, et dipoi hanno altro humore dentro). He does not like the subscription at all. But he is called to order by S. Ridolfi, who says he has not spoken the mind of his *panchata*, which is that the Signory examine the documents carefully, and act accordingly.

19*th July;* Becchi to the Ten.[3]—If your lordships cannot persuade his Paternity to consent to the union of the congregations, or if the Signory cannot give an undertaking that within two months Fra G. will come to Rome, the absolution is not to be hoped for. But if the city will do this, then neither the Pope nor the Cardinals of the commission (of

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[1] Villari, ii. Append. p. xliii. It appears, from the evidence given at the trial of Savonarola, that this letter was never sent. It was, however, signed by 358 persons, whose names may be found in Villari and Casanova, *Scelta*, pp. 514 *sqq.*

[2] Lupi, p. 28.

[3] Gherardi, *ibid.* A short note from Bracci of 14th July (*ibid.*) contains nothing of importance.

reform) are disposed to withhold it. The Signory would do well to write to the Cardinal of Naples. He is the Protector of the Order, and all defer to him.

21*st July;* The Signory to Bracci.[1]—He is thanked for his services, and bidden to find out who are the persons that oppose the petition in favour of Savonarola.

1*st August;* Same to same.[2]—They are glad to hear that the Pope is so favourably disposed, and are particularly grateful for the intercession of Capaccio and Perugia, who are to be warmly thanked.

3*rd August;* Savonarola to Lodovico Pittorio.[3]—After some very moderate and prudent counsels with regard to fasting, he proceeds to speak of his prophecies. To certain friars who have questioned him, Pittorio is to reply that not only have the predictions not failed, but they are being fulfilled; for six years ago he warned them to be ready, for that many of them would die (soon). They have studied the Scriptures to little purpose if they do not know that the affairs of Christ and His servants are not to be judged according to a worldly standard. If God thus chastises His servants, how much more will He punish the wicked.[4]

8*th August;* d'Este to Savonarola.[5]—Fra Girolamo had recently written to him to strengthen his faith in the prophecies. The Duke thanks his correspondent, and confesses that in view of the dilatoriness of the King of France, he has begun to doubt whether Charles will accomplish any great matter; but this doubt is in nowise contrary to his faith in Fra G., for he understands that the Friar never asserted absolutely that it was this king who was to bring about the events predicted. But if Savonarola's prediction had been unconditional, he would have been prepared to believe even this with full confidence (gagliardamente). He begs Savonarola to open his mind further on the subject, assuring him of his readiness to believe whatever he shall say, and that he will keep the matter absolutely secret and confidential.

13*th August;* Savonarola to Lodovico Pittorio.[6]—Those who say that our flock is dispersed are either misinformed or speak with malice. Our fellow-citizens have shown the charity and esteem they bear us by putting their country houses at the disposal of our young men (during the plague), and as a measure of prudence we have availed ourselves of their hospitality. As for our excommunication, I should esteem it a matter much more censurable were I to purchase an absolution; so you may see what liars those men are who invent such reports. We have

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[1] Marchese, n. 8.

[2] Marchese, nn. 9, 10 (two letters).

[3] Cappelli, n. 118. Pittorio was at this time chancellor at the court of Ferrara.

[4] We omit several letters of Somenzi and Manfredi which concern principally the affair of the Medicean conspiracy.

[5] Cappelli, n. 120.

[6] Marchese, p. 129.

done our duty in the matter; and it seems that the Pope is well disposed, were it not that some powerful adversary stands in the way. As for the city, its affairs will show whether we have spoken truly or falsely. Already the prophecies are in great measure fulfilled.

14*th August;* Savonarola to his brother, Messer Alberto.[1]—Our brother Maurelio (then a Dominican at S. Marco) is well. Our community lives in great joy, and leads an angelic life. The young men are gone to the country, etc. If Rome is against me, it is against Christ, and contends with God. Fear not; God will win. Do not be alarmed about my remaining in Florence. I am here to console the afflicted. Many have begged me to depart, but I would not leave my little flock. Incredible is the joy of those who even in death do not lose their faith, so that they may rather be said to sleep, commending their souls to God, than to die.

16*th August;* Manfredi to d'Este.[2]—I have heard from Rome that Fra G. can by no means hope to obtain the absolution sought for on his behalf by the Signory, unless he will obey the commands of his General, and that there is reason to fear lest the city be laid under an interdict. I wrote to him to this effect. He replies that he is well informed of all that goes on, and that he is ready to defend the cause of God, or rather God will defend His own cause. As men, when they undertake some work desire that it should go forward and prosper, "ad omni modo" (*sic*), let them believe that God has the same care for His work. We shall see, he says, whether God or man is more powerful. He would not allow me to visit him, because some in the convent have died of the plague and another is sick. We shall see what will come from Rome, and if anything happens which is calculated to disturb the peace of the Friar, I am sure that he will find some means to astonish the folk there, and elsewhere too (farà obstupire le brigate a Roma, et altrove anche).

28*th August;* Savonarola to Fra Marcantonio of Ficino (O.F.M).[3]—Thanks him for his letter. It is particularly gratifying to have the friendship of a member of the seraphic Order, and of a distinguished professor of theology. "Your declaration that you think well of our affairs is a sign of a good disposition; for, as you know, faith is one of the chief gifts of God, and it is acquired rather by living well than by disputing subtly, nor have we been able to bring forward any stronger argument on behalf of what we have uttered than to urge that whosoever is lax and tepid (inærtus, *sic*)[4] should live well and purge his heart from all sin, and then he will at last receive the true light (illustrationem) of

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[1] Marchese, p. 130.

[2] Cappelli, n. 123.

[3] Cappelli, n. 126.

[4] Perhaps we should read *incertus*. The meaning will then be: If a man is in doubt let him amend his life, and the light which he will receive will clear up his doubts.

the Lord. But when the things (which we have foretold) shall have come to pass they will bring forth not faith but certitude." As for what men say about me, I care nothing at all, provided only that God may be glorified, and His faith revive in the hearts of men, for which cause I fight, even unto death. Pray for me, and may we ever live in mutual charity.

29th August; Manfredi to d'Este.[1]—The letter concerns the conspirators who have been recently put to death. The Duke of Milan had interceded for the conspirators, and had incurred the reproach of being a meddler. D'Este had written to the same effect, but his letter had come too late. Manfredi had kept the missive in his pocket, having previously told the Signory that his master was well assured that they would act in the best and wisest way that should be possible. "Whereby your Highness has acquired a much better reputation for discretion than the Duke of Milan." These popular governments need to be humoured.

26th September; the Signory to Caraffa.[2]—With many compliments they beg him to intercede with the Pope for Savonarola. He cannot confer a greater favour on the city.

28th September; 13th October; 7th November; 11th December; The Signory to Bracci.[3]—A series of letters urging him not to desist from his efforts on behalf of Fra Girolamo.

In their letter of 13th October the Signory declare their conviction that Fra Hieronymo will have "done everything," *i.e.* all that has been required of him, or whatever Caraffa has recommended that he should do. These words refer, no doubt, to Savonarola's letter of the same date, a document which has only recently been brought to light, and which is of sufficient importance to be given in full.

CONVENT OF S. MARK,
FLORENCE, *13th October* 1497.

To the Pope for Absolution.

MOST HOLY FATHER,—I kiss the feet of your Holiness. As a child grieving at having incurred the displeasure of his father desires and seeks every means and opportunity of appeasing his anger, nor can any refusal make him despair of regaining his former affection, since it is written: "Ask and ye shall receive, knock and it shall be opened to you"; so I also, being more concerned (sollicitus) on account of the favour of your Holiness having been withdrawn from me, than for any other misfortune (jacturam), fly eagerly to your feet, begging you to give ear at length to my cries, and keep me no longer away from your embrace. For to whom shall I go, if not, as one of his flock, to the Shepherd whose

[1] Cappelli, n. 127. [2] Marchese, n. 13. [3] *Ibid.*, nn. 14-17.

voice I love to hear, whose blessing I implore, whose saving presence I ardently desire? I would go at once and cast myself at your feet, if I were safe on the journey from the malice and plots of my enemies. As soon as I can do so without risk I will at once set out, and I wish with all my heart that I could do so now, in order that I might at last clear myself of every calumny.

Meanwhile, most humbly do I submit in all things, as I have ever done, to your authority, and if through any want of judgment or inadvertence I have erred in anything, I humbly ask forgiveness. For you will find in me at least no wilful malice.

Be pleased, therefore, I beseech your Holiness, not to close against me the fountain of your kindness and clemency, nor spurn one whom you would find, if once you knew him, not less devoted to you than sincere, and at all times your most obedient servant. I humbly commend myself to your Holiness.—Your most devoted son and servant,

BROTHER JEROME OF FERRARA,
Of the Order of Preachers.

Every one, it may be presumed, would very gladly welcome any scrap of evidence, much more any document of first-class importance such as the above, which might help to place the conduct of Savonarola in a more favourable light than that in which it has been commonly regarded. And it must certainly be admitted that the letter which we have just given would seem, at first sight, to prove beyond the possibility of doubt that his dispositions were those of perfect submission and obedience. Unfortunately, however, the circumstances of the case are such as, in our opinion, to exclude this conclusion, eminently satisfactory as it would be if only it were true. There is a short parable in S. Matthew's Gospel about the son who, being bidden to go and work in his father's vineyard, replied: "I go, sir"; and he went not.[1] Even so Fra Girolamo, while declaring himself ready to submit to the Pope in all things, absolutely declined to submit in regard to the particular thing that was demanded of him. This he plainly declared to Manfredi a few weeks later, and still more emphatically in the sermon which he preached on Sexagesima Sunday in the following year, as will appear in due course. To deny that Fra Girolamo, notwithstanding his letter of 13th October, did actually disobey the Pope, is to disregard his own reiterated statements. The only defence that can be set up for him is that his disobedience was justified. That this was so is the verdict of many for whose convictions we have a sincere respect; but we trust that a contrary

[1] Matt. xxi. 30.

opinion may be expressed without offence. Our present concern, however, is not so much to urge our own individual views, which are of comparatively little concern to anybody, as to set forth the whole of the evidence bearing on the case after a fuller and more systematic fashion than has hitherto been attempted in any work accessible to the ordinary English reader. As regards Savonarola's letter of 13th October, it must at least be admitted that (assuming its genuineness) it shows that, in resisting Alexander VI., he was not himself conscious of any want of true loyalty to the Holy See. Was he right, or was he mistaken? And, if he was mistaken, was his mistake entirely blameless? These are the questions which the reader will do well to keep in mind.

13*th November;* Manfredi to d'Este.[1]—The newly elected Ten are all favourable to Fra Girolamo, and are all men of position. The plague is all but extinct.

19*th November;* Same to same.[2]—D'Este has incurred some odium at Florence on account of certain negotiations of his with the Duke of Milan. Manfredi thought it would be well to secure the good offices of Savonarola in order to clear up any misunderstanding, at the same time warning him to proceed with great discretion.[3] Savonarola has commended the action of the Duke, praising him for his fidelity to his promises, and for his prudence in keeping the peace with all his neighbours. He thinks, however, that it would be no bad thing for the Duke to keep up good relations with the French, so far as may be consistent with his honour and interests (quando cum honore et comodo el se possa fare); alleging that he does not see that the King of France has been as yet rejected by God.[4] Fra Girolamo also mentioned that he has had a visit from a certain Florentine who is in the employ of the Emperor (homo adoperato per la Maestà dello Imperatore in Italia). This man tried to induce him to use his influence with his fellow-citizens to persuade them to join the League. The Friar answered that he did not meddle in these political matters, and that the Florentine people were quite capable of managing their own affairs without his advice. He knew very well that this man had been sent in order to sound him, and, probably, to get him into trouble. He hopes that his affairs with the Pope will soon be arranged . . . which, if it comes to pass, will turn to his great praise and com-

[1] Cappelli, n. 134.

[2] *Ibid.*, n. 135.

[3] "Adducendomi pero dicto Frate che cum destro modo porgesse questa justificatione di V. E. per omni bono rispecto a quelle persone che li parerà necessario."

[4] "Allegando che 'l non vedeva che el Re de Franza per anche fosse reprobato da Iddio."

mendation, *and the more so because he has not yielded to the Pope's demands.*"[1]

From these last words alone it would be fair to conclude that the expressions of perfect submission to his Holiness which are contained in the newly-recovered letter of Savonarola, must not be understood as implying any readiness to yield on the particular points at issue. But, in fact, the much stronger language used by Fra Girolamo in his next (and last) course of sermons leaves no kind of doubt on the matter. Of these sermons a somewhat full account will be given in the next two chapters.

28*th December;* Manfredi to d'Este.[2]—The Pope is exhorting the Florentines to drop their alliance with the French King, who is advised by his own counsellors to abandon the project of again invading Italy.

30*th December;* Same to same.[3]—Gives a list of the Signory appointed for January and February. They are all men of ability and of good family (by contrast with some of their predecessors in office), and are nearly all attached (affezionati) to "our Fra Hieronymo."

"Our Fra Hieronymo" had, meanwhile, begun to show signs of his intention to break his long silence, as appears from his action in publicly celebrating Mass and administering Holy Communion on Christmas Day (1497). To this incident we must recur hereafter. For the present, we conclude with a summary of three letters which bring upon the scene a new ambassador to the Papal Court, Messer Domenico Bonsi, despatched to Rome, primarily, as it would seem, to negotiate for the restoration of Pisa,[4] but holding also a commission to agitate for the absolution of Savonarola.

9*th January* 1498; The Signory to Bonsi.[5]—He is to use all diligence to obtain the absolution, "integra et libera," of Fra Hieronymo. In particular, he is to do his best with the Cardinal of Naples; and, in general, he is to let no opportunity escape him of furthering the affair.

5*th February;* Bonsi to the Ten.[6]—He has had a long talk with the Bishop of Perugia about the absolution. Perugia will do his utmost with

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[1] "Spera sua Paternita che presto sara acconzo el facto suo cum el Papa, trovandose la materia ben disposta et sua Santità inclinata ad farlo; el che succedendo li serà di gran laude et comendatione, *eo maxime non se avendo voluto inclinare ad fare quelle cose che li havea ricerchate sua Santità chel faccesse.*"

[2] Cappelli, n. 139.

[3] *Ibid.*, n. 140.

[4] Gherardi, p. 174.

[5] Gherardi, p. 175.

[6] *Ibid.*

the Pope, and Bonsi has urged him to do so, alleging "every possible reason," etc.

6th February; Same to same.—Perugia reports that the Pope is "cold" about Fra Hieronymo. His Holiness will see me to-morrow.

8th February; Same to same.—Has had his audience. When he wanted to speak of Fra H. the Pope stopped him, and said he must first have an answer from the Signory as to what they would be prepared to do if Pisa were restored. As to the Friar, the case was very serious, as affecting the honour of the Holy See, and many of the Cardinals thought very badly of his not having respected the excommunication. B. replied by insisting on the excellent qualities and the good works of Fra H., etc.

12th February; Same to same.[1]—Has done his best with the Cardinals, especially Napoli. It is very difficult to make any head. They throw all responsibility on the Pope; and the Pope says that the affair of Pisa must first be settled, and then he will be disposed to grant anything.[2]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 176.

[2] In plain words Alexander was quite willing that Pisa should be restored as the price of the adhesion of Florence to the League. Fra Girolamo's affair might be settled as a mere incident of the bargain.

CHAPTER XIV

SEPTUAGESIMA 1498

CHRISTMAS DAY, 1497, saw the first public act of disobedience to the sentence of excommunication which Savonarola allowed himself. His public celebration of Mass, and his openly communicating the faithful on that day, naturally produced a marked impression, and the bold act was regarded with disfavour even by some of his friends. He did it, says Nardi, "con gran maraviglia d'ognuno, e dispiacimento non piccolo de' suoi divoti." Landucci, who does not mention the Christmas celebration, tells us in his diary how, on the Feast of the Epiphany, the Signory went to S. Marco to make their offertory, and kissed the hands of Fra Girolamo at the altar; and this was done, he adds, "non sanza grande maraviglia de' piu intendenti, e non tanto degli avversari, quanto degli amici del Frate."

The Christmas celebrations having prepared the way, no one could be surprised that Fra Girolamo should again resume the work of preaching during the penitential season which soon followed; and the faithful diligence of his disciple Ser Lorenzo Vivoli has preserved for us the full text of this last Lenten course. It began, according to custom, on Septuagesima Sunday, which fell in that year on 11th February, and, notwithstanding the efforts made by the Vicar-General to prevent this, the first sermons of the series were delivered in the Duomo.

The preacher took for his text the words: "Domine quid multiplicati sunt qui tribulant me," etc.

"My Lord [he begins] whereas I am but dust and ashes, I would wish this morning to address myself in the first place to Thy Majesty. Thou hast set me afloat, O Lord, upon a wide sea, and I no longer behold the port. I cannot turn back if I would, and I would not if I could. I cannot because it is not Thy will; and I would not because it is not Thy

will ; for Thy will I neither can nor will resist. Where Thou hast placed me, there I am content to be, only do Thou, I beseech Thee, be with me." He does not ask for silver and gold but for light: "Domine fac ut videam." He prays for the light of reason, for the light of faith, and also for the light of prophecy (confortami anchora il lume sopranaturale da conoscere le cose future et occulte) ; and he asks this to the end that he be neither himself deceived nor a deceiver of the people. He prays, too, that God would now commence a new era (un nuovo tempo), and that this may be the beginning of greater things than He has yet done ; and to the same effect he invokes the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints.

Then, turning to the people, "good news," he assures them, "has come from heaven.[1] 'Fear not, ye faint-hearted, for the Lord is with you.'"

"Soldiers, after a skirmish, are wont to hold a kind of review, or inspection, for which they refurbish their arms and accoutrements. We, after our skirmish, have done likewise ; we have held our review, with processions and many prayers and hymns and canticles of joy. And now, why should we fear? Have I not repeatedly told you that we have to fight and to overcome? I tell you we shall surely overcome ; and when our undertaking seems to be entirely frustrated, then will it arise more glorious than ever. I tell you that never was there a more glorious or happier time than the present ; and we mean to do great things and glorious things, with God's help."

He goes on to describe a dialogue that he has lately had with "human wisdom," which began by calling him a fool, and professed to convict him out of his own mouth, for he had applied to himself the text, "stultissimus sum virorum," etc. He admits that he is a fool, but declares that on this very account he is happy. "For the fool is not conscious of his own folly, but thinks himself the wisest fellow on earth, and so he has always a good time." He reminds "Wisdom," however, that she has quoted only half the text, which runs : "Visio quam locutus est vir cum quo est Deus, et qui Deo secum morante confortatus ait : Stultissimus sum," etc. "Wisdom" had reproached him with putting his trust in the people. He answers that he places it not in the people but in God.

But some have a scruple about the excommunication. He will solve this scruple without entering into the minutiæ of Canon Law (senza canoni e senza tanti capitoli) ; but first he will remind them how, years ago, he foretold that he should have to contend against a double power, the temporal and the spiritual. And therefore it was necessary for the fulfilment of this prophecy that the spiritual sword should be

[1] *I.e.* as appears from the next sermon, in answer to the foregoing prayer.

drawn. It is because our teaching has led, and does still lead, men to a good life, that the devil has stirred up against us so many persecutions. Moreover, it was needful that the wheat should be separated from the chaff. A first sifting was effected by our preaching; but because some of the "tepidi" made a pretence of being good, God has sent this new winnowing-fan, viz. the excommunication, in order more effectually to separate the tepid from the good. "Now," he proceeds, "let us enquire into the question of its validity.

"In every instrument three things are to be considered; the matter, the form, and the moving power (la virtù). Take, for instance, a saw. Its matter is iron. Its form is the shape of the instrument, with teeth, handle, etc. Now, if the workman casts away his saw among other bits of broken iron, it becomes like them, and is no longer effectively a saw, for there is no hand to move it. So it is with the prince; if he be not guided as an instrument of the superior agent, *i.e.* of God, you may say that he is no better than yourselves (di' alhora che 'gli è eguale a te); that there is no hand to move him; that he is like those broken tools which are all equal; and you may tell him so. And if he should reply: 'I hold the power,' you may answer: 'This is not true, because you are moved by no guiding hand; *you are a broken tool.*' And if you were to ask me, 'How am I to know that such an one is not moved by the supreme agent?' I could say: 'Consider whether he acts in opposition to the wisdom of that supreme agent.' And because that wisdom loves a virtuous life and the common weal, as often as you see that the prince acts in a manner destructive of these things, you may say at once: 'You are not moved by the supreme agent, and therefore you are a broken tool.' Hence S. Thomas says that if the prince should enact a law which is contrary to virtue and the common weal, the people are not bound to observe it.[1]

"It is to be noted, however, that this error on the part of the prince may have one of two causes—his own malice, or the evil persuasions of others. But, in either case, the saw is not guided by the hand of the artificer, and in the present instance I assure you that the Pope's advisers are not using the saw well with this excommunication, and will make but a bungling job of it (non segheranno bene a questa volta, e non faranno buon scanno). For what is their object? Every child knows that what they really wish is to do away with a virtuous life, and to destroy all good government that is for the common weal. No sooner does the excommunication come than the taverns are thrown open, and all manner of vice flourishes (mano a taverne, a lascivie, et ad ogni male; et il ben vivere andava per terra). It needs no study of the Canon Law, but only a little common-sense, to see with what intention the saw is being worked. I wonder that you should have any doubt

[1] Would S. Thomas have approved of an appeal to a popular audience as to the wisdom or unwisdom, the justice or injustice, of a Papal command concerning the internal affairs of a religious Order? We take leave to doubt it.

on the subject, and I tell you that if we are banned on earth we are blessed in heaven.[1]

"So much we learn from natural reason. But faith, moreover, teaches us that the proper aim and end of all laws, of all ceremonies, of all theology, is the perfection of charity. Accordingly, whoso commands what is contrary to charity, which is the fulfilling of the law, let him be anathema, let him be excommunicate, nay, such an one is excommunicate of God. If an angel were to give such a command (se lo dicesse un angelo) let him be anathema. . . . Nay, though all the Saints, and even the Virgin Mary herself, were to do so—which is, as I have said, impossible, nor will they ever do it—let them be anathema. Tell me, then, suppose one sees the wolf coming to devour the sheep, and beholds the destruction of souls . . . ought he not to lay down his life for his sheep? And will such an one be therefore excommunicate? Do not believe it! Excommunicate is he who acts against charity. Does it then seem to you that I ought to flee? I have stood firm until now, and I tell you I will continue to stand firm. Or do you wish that I should abandon my sons, who are also your sons, who have been drawn by God to lead a virtuous life under the shadow of my protection (sotto l'ombra mia)? The good shepherd does not abandon his sheep, but lays down his life for them; I tell you that, rather than abandon them, I would be cut into a thousand pieces.

"You say to me: 'Bring about this union, enter into this congregation.' I tell you I will never do it; I will not have my sons relax their mode of life, for this were contrary to charity."[2] So, too, he will not leave his flock to go to Rome. Nor will he cease from preaching. "Have you not seen that since my preaching ceased morality has declined (il ben vivere è scemato), and vice has grown bold, and that everything was beginning to fall into confusion? Look into the matter, and see if you can find any law or canon, or council, or doctor, or bishop, who says the contrary to what I have told you. And if you do, *escomunicato sia*, let him (or it) be excommunicate. Nay, if there were any Pope who had said so—I do not say that any Pope has said so—let him be anathema.

"But some one says: 'O Brother, do you really believe that this excommunication is not valid?'—Most certainly it is not. 'But who has told you so?'—God has told me so. Mind what I say: God Himself has

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[1] The recrudescence of vice, of which Savonarola speaks, was a terrible evil. But the spirit of opposition to authority which (whatever his own sentiments may have been) his words undoubtedly tended to promote, might well be regarded as in the long run an even greater evil.

[2] A recent writer asserts that Savonarola "had only been commanded, under pain of excommunication, not to put obstacles into the way of the union," and that "he deemed it best to remain altogether passive" in the matter, and "did not put any obstacle in the way of it." We do not see how these statements can be reconciled with the Friar's own words.

told me so. 'O Brother, if your God has told you that it is invalid, our God has told us that it is valid. We say that Christ is with us.'—Nay, I will prove to you that Christ is with *us*, and that He stands rather with those who are excommunicated, as we have been, than with those who, like you, declare that you are blessed. In the days of our Lord an edict was passed that whoever confessed the name of Christ should be excommunicate and expelled from the synagogue. I, for my part, wish to be with Christ, and to confess Him, and to find myself in the company of such outcasts. 'But, Brother, many good men are against you.'—I answer that not all those who seem good are so indeed." He bids them consider who they are that most actively oppose him. They are those whose conduct is scandalous. And who are they that favour his work? They are those whose whole course of life is virtuous. On which side, then, will the waverers choose to place themselves? If on the side of the wicked, they declare their own wickedness. "For my part, I will stand on the side of the good. And if one cannot do what is right without being excommunicate, then I will take my stand with the excommunicate." The waverers are exhorted to keep constantly in mind the nefarious purposes for which the sentence has been procured; if they are sincere they will know what to do. If they do not see the case as clearly as he does, let them pray for light, and let them examine whether perchance it is some subtle pride (qualche sottile superbia) which blinds them.[1] Nor can any one be excused from fault if, by reason of his scruples, he should elect to remain neutral. To such he says: "Do you wish me to speak the truth? You have opposed God, because, if every one had been like you, the city and 'il ben vivere' would have been ruined.

"Now I have a piece of news for you which I have on the authority of a man of position, and well worthy of credit. He tells me that while some one was conversing with a certain 'gran maestro' in Rome, perhaps the greatest of them all [*i.e.* the Pope], this great personage declared that all who had spoken to him against the Friar appeared to be men of evil life, while all those who spoke in his favour seemed to be good men.

"I tell you that whoso opposes this work opposes Christ. . . . Understand me well, O Rome! Whoso opposes this work opposes Christ. O Italy! Whoso opposes this work opposes Christ. O Christian people! If you oppose it you are fighting against Christ, and not against the Friar. If you say that the priests of the Church are gathered together against me, I reply that this has come to pass that the prophecies might be fulfilled, even as in our Lord's Passion many things were done that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. In this, your hour, you make me perforce a prophet; for you know well that long ago, and repeatedly, I foretold the opposition of the priesthood and of the wicked.

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[1] Was it, perhaps, some subtle pride which blinded Savonarola himself?

"And I tell you that a new time is coming; and great wars are at hand . . . and we must sustain a more severe contest than that in which we are now engaged. O Lord, I do not ask for peace; War! War! War! is my cry. War, I mean, with the devil; for us it is enough to be at peace with Christ. As for the excommunication, which is said by some to be null in the sight of God, but externally binding, it is enough for me that I am not bound in the sight of Christ (da Christo), and that He should bless me. *O my Lord, I turn to Thee and I say: If ever I should seek absolution from this excommunication, send me to Hell!* I should fear to commit a mortal sin were I to seek absolution.[1]

"As for those who fear lest they too should incur excommunication by coming to hear my sermons, I ask: Is it a sin to preach? Is preaching a crime? If the author of the excommunication were to say so, he would contradict the Gospel.[2] Oh, but you say: 'I mean because of the disobedience.'—And I say that if the law were observed which forbids that any one be made a Doctor of Divinity or a Canon without sufficient learning, there would not be so much ignorance among us." He concludes this part of the sermon by inviting "you, my priests, and I call those 'mine' who wish to lead a good life," to attend at S. Mark's on the following Thursday after Vespers, when he will give them 'una bella lettione,' and will instruct them as to their duty under present circumstances."

Then he goes on to speak of those friars who will not absolve those who come to hear him. "Would you like me to tell you who will absolve you? Well, no, it is better that I should say nothing about it, I will only say—just do like this."—"Here let the reader observe," says honest Vivoli, in a parenthetical note, "that the preacher said just nothing at all, but jingled his keys one against the other, whereby every one understood his meaning to be 'Give them money, and they will absolve you.'"[3]

[1] O Signor mio, io mi volgo a te, e si ti dico, che *s'io mi fo mai assolvere da questa escomunica*, MANDAMI IN INFERNO! Io ne farei scropolo di peccato mortale s'io mi facessi assolvere" (*Prediche sopra l'Esodo*: Venice, 1540, f. 12). These words have, we must confess, caused us some misgivings as to the genuineness of the letter "pro absolutione" quoted in the last chapter. It must, however, be remembered that the words of the title "pro absolutione" are not Savonarola's own.

[2] Savonarola must have known well that he had not been, and never would have been, censured for preaching the Gospel, or for rebuking vice as such. Again, preaching is a good work, yet one that needs an ecclesiastical license or faculty. According to his principles no such faculty would be needed.

[3] No one, we trust, among our non-Catholic readers will be so foolish as to infer from this passage that the sale of absolutions is part of the Catholic system. If there were priests in Fra Girolamo's time who were ready to perpetrate this wickedness, we have here only an illustration of the old adage: "Corruptio optimi pessima."

"Would you like me also to give you a piece of good advice whereby you may cleanse your whole territory? *Turn them out!* (Levategli via!) 'O Brother, you are speaking too plainly (tu tocchi troppo il vivo).'" He hastens, however, to explain that he speaks only of bad priests, not of the good.[1] There will be plenty of confessors to supply their needs; but let them go to confession without delay, and let them thank God who has delivered them from tepidity, that is to say, from the hands of bad confessors. Let them remember how, in 1478, in the days of the conspiracy of the Pazzi (when the Archbishop of Florence was murdered, and the city laid under interdict), there were plenty of priests who said Mass and administered the Sacraments. Were they worse off now than then? "I have not murdered an Archbishop, or a priest, or any one else." It is objected that in those days the welfare of the government was at issue. And now the government of Christ and the faith of Christ, and Christian morality are at stake.

He next appeals to his prophetical light as confirming the invalidity of the sentence. Some one objects:—

"'Brother, I don't believe you; you have worked no miracles, that I should be bound to believe you against the Church.'—What will you have (Fa tu)?" he replies. "It has not yet pleased our Lord to grant a miracle (fare altretanti). 'But you said that the excommunication would be borne aloft on the point of a lance' (*i.e.* in triumph, which was certainly not the fashion in which Camerino, or possibly his substitute, brought it).—I tell you that not everything has yet come to pass. . . . But if you have eyes, you must have seen that many signs have followed. You have seen that in Rome *one has lost his son*,[2] and to one one thing has happened, to another another thing; and you have seen who has died *here*, and I could tell you, an I would, *who is in hell*. . . .[3] If everything had come to pass, you would have seen everything. You have seen a part, because a part has come to pass.

"'But we thought that you were now going to turn the key.'[4]—It is

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[1] Again we may venture to express the doubt whether S. Thomas, for instance (whose teaching Savonarola is declared to have so faithfully followed), would have sanctioned an irresponsible appeal of this sort to a kind of ecclesiastical lynch law.

[2] The allusion is, of course, to the Pope and his son, the Duke of Gandia. The reader must judge whether or no these words were needlessly provocative.

[3] Some think that he here alludes to Bernardo del Nero. We are loth to believe this; and yet the mention of *processi* immediately afterwards seems to point to one who has died at the hands of justice.

[4] *I.e.* to open the casket of hidden truth; to speak plainly on certain matters on which he had hitherto been silent. What this "turning of the key" more particularly signified will appear from the depositions at the trial, and from other documents to be hereafter quoted.

not yet time. Heretofore we have drawn forth only one of these five stones that David carried; but it will not be long before we shall produce the others. *You have not yet constrained me to work a miracle* (Tu non m' hai anchora constretto al miracolo). When He shall be constrained,[1] God will open His hand according as His honour shall require. But if you would reason well, you would see that you have signs enough." The signs are as follows. (1) Their deliverance from many dangers. "The Emperor came—and took himself off. Your enemy (Piero) stood at your gates—and took himself off. And although you have lost Pisa, it was not by way of war. You Florentines are much afraid of war. I tell you not to be afraid. . . . If all Italy should fall upon you, we will stay shut up in our cells, and will chase away the enemy, and the angels will fight for us." (2) The predictions have come true so far. (3) His teaching has produced good fruits, which have grown in spite of contradiction. On which side, then, will they range themselves?

One reflection, among many which are suggested by the perusal of this sermon may be here set down. Much has been heard, of late, about lawlessness in the Church of England. With every disposition to appreciate at their full value the moral reforms brought about by Savonarola, we cannot help feeling that, if ultimate issues are to be looked to, rather than immediate results, the sermon preached on Septuagesima Sunday 1498, in the Duomo of Florence, was calculated to promote lawlessness, or at least insubordination, in the Church Catholic. The appeal to public opinion as against authority in disciplinary matters appears to us to be closely allied, in principle, to the appeal to private judgment.

That his words on this occasion were no hasty utterances, forced from him by some sudden gust of passion, is made abundantly clear by his next sermon, that of Sexagesima Sunday, in which he commences by resuming, in considerable detail, what he had said on the former occasion. His prayer (so he reminds his hearers) had been, not for a speedy return to the post of peace and security, but for light, "che non ingannassimo et non fussimo ingannati"; for the light of reason and the light of faith, and also for the light of prophecy, "che noi intendessimo le cose future per salute del popolo." He had prayed also that God would put forth his hand to accomplish new things, and great things; and the divine response to his prayer had been: "Nolite timere pusillanimes, Dominus enim vobiscum est"—"Fear not, ye faint-hearted, for the Lord is with you."

[1] "Quando *sara* constretto." But the context seems to require "quando *sarò* constretto"—"when I shall be constrained."

Once more he reminds them that the excommunication has come "that the prophecies might be fulfilled," and also for the more thorough sifting of the good from the bad. And then again once more he sets forth the reasons for believing it to be invalid. After this preface the preacher proceeds to assert a bolder proposition than any he had yet advanced.

He is not going to preach [he says], but once more to talk quietly with them; and he undertakes to prove "*that whoever obstinately maintains the validity of the excommunication is a heretic;* and therefore I tell you that if such an one be a priest he has forfeited his benefice, supposing him to have one (ha perso il beneficio, se è parrochiano); you cannot receive Communion at his hands, nor hold any intercourse (impacciarti) with him, and therefore you must expel such persons from the city (bisogna cacciarli dalla città). For Christians ought not to hold intercourse with heretics, according to the words of S. John about a heretic: 'Non dixeritis illi: Ave.'

"O Brother," the objector is made to say, "don't touch on this point." "I tell you," is the reply, "that now it is necessary to cast the button from the foil (far la guerra a ferri puliti), that now the whole truth must be declared."

Having spoken of priests, the preacher takes occasion to say a word of advice to those mothers who have sons destined for the priesthood. Any man who desires a benefice, and the cure of souls, even though he were an angel, is proud. "You think your son is a good young man . . . but, if he desires a benefice, with cure of souls, *he is a devil* (è un diavolo). He ought to wait till he is promoted, not to seek promotion." This is what he told the priests who came to his conference on Thursday last, and he added that the hailstorms and the pestilence of the preceding year had been chastisements sent on account of bad priests.

Lest any one should doubt his orthodoxy, he submits all that he has to say to the judgment of the Holy Roman Church; but at the same time he reminds them that every man, even the Pope, can err. It is mere folly to say (or, as he phrases it, "You are a fool if you say") that a Pope cannot err. "You say: 'Yes, as man, not as Pope.' But I tell you that Popes can err even in these processes and sentences of theirs." His hearers must be aware how often one Pope has set aside the ordinances of another; and how many contrary opinions different Popes have expressed. In such cases, either both have erred, or at least one.[1]

[1] Again we cannot help asking: Is this the language of loyalty? Every Catholic knows that Papal infallibility has its specific limitations, and that it is nowise concerned with such matters as an individual penal sentence. But to dwell, in a sermon *ad populum*, on the real or supposed blunders of successive Popes, hardly tends to promote popular reverence for the Holy See.

Then comes the long retrospect of his dealings with Alexander VI., to which we have referred in a former chapter, and which need not be reproduced here. It will be sufficient to select a few characteristic passages.

The Pope's action with regard to the Congregation of S. Marco is like that of the worthy Podestà of Brescia, who always agreed with the last speaker. His proceedings resemble those of a chess player who is hard pressed, and who moves his king backwards and forwards, now here, now there, to keep him out of check. When the Pope first forbade him to preach (in 1495), he answered to the effect that his Holiness had been deceived. But when his representations were not listened to, he continued to preach freely. (It is worthy of note that Savonarola makes no reference here to the supposed permission to preach obtained for him—as is alleged—by Caraffa.) "And this was the occasion on which I came up here and said that *I was not commissioned to preach by any man in this world, nor by any lord, but by Him who is Lord of Lords*, and by the Holy Trinity."[1]

As for the machinations of his enemies, they are directed not against himself, but against the welfare of the city. "You, my fellow-citizens, you are 'the Friar,' *i.e.* it is you, not me, whom they attack."

His doctrine is sound and salutary. It is in conformity with Holy Scripture, and with the principles of philosophy. It has brought peace to the city, and had resulted in the abolition of the sport of stone-throwing (the favourite pastime of the Florentine youth) and other worse evils; all of which have begun to revive since he ceased to preach. Parents forsooth have a scruple about letting their children come to hear his sermons. But they let them go out at night, and ask no questions.

But why cannot he let some one else preach in his stead? He would be only too glad to do so, if there were any one capable of undertaking the task. But no one is to be found.

Coming back to his original proposition, he affirms once more that whosoever obstinately maintains the validity of the sentence is a heretic.

"Go now, and write this to Rome! You write nothing but lies; this time write the truth. Men have now become afraid to preach the truth. Preachers are become dependents and retainers of great lords, and flatter them accordingly. It was not always so. S. Paul reproved S. Peter. And if it be said: 'Where is S. Paul now?' it may be answered: 'Where is S. Peter now?' The proportion at any rate is

[1] We have been found fault with for saying that Savonarola put forward a claim to a special divine mission which made him independent of the hierarchical jurisdiction of the Church. This appears to us to be the practical purport of the words quoted above.

kept. Or perchance it is even reversed. You, a layman, in reproving a priest, may be reproving one who is your inferior, because it may be that you have more grace than he."

But it is objected that he has himself written to seek absolution. "Certainly not of my own accord (non io già per me).[1] To be sure, they wanted me to write, acknowledging that I had been in error. I would do nothing of the kind. . . . It is true that I wrote that for the avoidance of scandal it would be well that the excommunication should be withdrawn, but that is all.

"Our enemies are like a night-walker bent on mischief, who, seeing a lighted torch approaching, and fearing to be recognised, cries out: 'Put out that light.' But I tell you, blow as hard as you like, you will not be able to put out this light."

He concludes by inviting them to prepare for this "Pasqua" which they call the Carnival. He would have it to be a real "Pasqua," at which every one should confess and communicate, and organise a triumphant celebration for the honour of Christ.

The Quinquagesima Sermon has one feature which distinguishes it from its two immediate predecessors. The application of the words of Holy Scripture is more continuous and more pointed. The passage about "the idols of the nations" is especially powerful, as the reader may divine even from the fragments of it which are all that can here be given.

After the usual repetition of the chief points of the previous discourse, Fra Girolamo, who had hitherto held his audience in suspense as to what book of Holy Scripture he was going to choose for exposition in this series of sermons, informs them that to-day he is going to preach on the Psalm, "In exitu Israel."

"'But, Father, won't you begin to expound the book to-day? Have you not chosen it yet?'—Oh yes, I have chosen it; but to-day I am going to speak about this Psalm. And because we have been delivered out of Egypt, we will sing 'Alleluia.' 'But, Father, the Church does not sing "Alleluia" at this season.'—Nevertheless, we will sing 'Alleluia' to-day. We shall pass the Red Sea, and Pharaoh will have no power to hurt us.[2]

"Jacob went forth from a barbarous people. Barbarians are those who cannot speak Latin or Greek or Hebrew. But God's barbarians are those who cannot speak the language of Christ. 'Dii gentium . . .

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[1] Perhaps more literally: "Not I; at least not of my own accord."

[2] "El Frate perseverava in isparlare contro al Pontefice," says Parenti, "chiamandolo Pharaone; e per simili altri disonesti nomi" (Ranke, *Historisch-biographische Studien*, p. 296).

os habent et non loquentur.' These tepidi have mouths, but they can't speak (the language of Christ): they howl, and bark, and gibber, but they don't know how to talk aright. 'Aures habent et non audient.' They have ears, but they don't use them to listen to those sermons against which they are always talking. Why do they contradict what they haven't heard? But can they not at least perceive the sweet odour of a good life? No: 'Nares habent et non odorabunt.' Again: 'Manus habent et non palpabunt.' They have hands, but they perform no good works. I have said that you are idols. An idol must be pegged to the ground to hold him firm. So you are just pegged down (inchiodati) to that earth for which alone you care.

"'But, Father, don't you see that the numbers (of your hearers) are growing smaller?'—Yes, and they will grow smaller still under the winnowing-fan of God. 'But the excommunication?'—Oh, I tell you these excommunications are cheap to-day; any man may have whom he will excommunicated for a few shillings (per quattro lire). O religious! O Rome! O Italy!—nay, to all the world I cry: Come here and listen. Either this thing is of God, or it is not. If it is of God you cannot prevail. If it be not of God it will fail of itself. Why, then, all this opposition? O Rome, it is hard for you to kick against the goad. O Rome, and ye prelates who oppose me, I warn you that if this thing is of God you will not be able to destroy it, but it will cast down your walls. O wicked citizens, you shall be crushed under this weight, and when you think to have stamped out this thing it will rise again more full of life than ever."

The preacher then proceeded to make this solemn appeal:—

"O Lord, I would that Thou shouldst make haste. We can do no more. And that God may be the more ready to hasten matters, I propose, dearly beloved, that on the Carnival day we should all join in earnest prayer. And I will say Mass, and I will take the Sacrament in my hands, and let every one earnestly pray that if this thing proceeds from me, and if I am deceiving myself, *Christ would send upon me fire from heaven, which may then and there swallow me up in hell* (che Christo facci venire un fuoco dal cielo sopra di me che m'assorba nell' inferno); but that if it is from God He would make haste.[1] And to the end that you may have more light, take care that prayers (to this effect) are said in all your monasteries, and tell the 'tepidi' to come, and to pray that morning that God would deliver you, and that if I deceive you a fire may come from heaven to destroy me. Write this everywhither, bid mounted messengers ride post to Rome (spacciate staffette a Roma);

[1] There is clearly a false and un-Catholic principle involved in laying down the conditions under which God is to make His will known. To appeal from the visible, tangible, living authority of the Church which He has established, to the evidence of a miracle which He has not promised, is to expose oneself (and in this case many others also) to a harmful delusion.

. . . and bid them pray on that day that if this thing is not of God, destruction may fall upon me as I have said ;"—and so forth with further iteration.

But some one objects : "You say you will hold the Sacrament in your hands. But perhaps you do not believe in it (the Blessed Sacrament), and so you won't care." He answers that if he were to act as he proposes, *not* believing, this would indeed be an awful crime that would deserve God's instant chastisement.

"'But you are exposing yourself to risk!'—No, I am exposing myself to no risk ; you will see how joyful I shall be in company with my Lord (vedrai pur come io mi starò allegro col mio Signore). I am no fool. I know what I am about. I will stand firm, and you shall sing : 'Stir up Thy power, O Lord, and come to our deliverance.' I shall stand, as I have said, with the Sacrament in my hand. Ask one of those 'tepidi' whether he is ready to try the same experiment."

The concluding words of the sermon offer a pleasing contrast to a passage in which we find some difficulty in recognising the accents of true humility.

"Afterwards," he says, "we will have the procession of the children. But, my children, I warn you to be grave. Let your procession be modest and orderly, and let each say his prayers. And you must not cry, 'Viva Gesù Christo' again till I tell you. For these things must be done under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and all in order. Now we are going to make a great war on the devil and his carnal pomps (spassi carnali) in place of which we will introduce spiritual pomps."

In fact, under the favouring auspices of a friendly Signory, the procession, and the sacred dance, and the bonfire of vanities, were carried out with greater solemnity than in the previous year. And whatever may be thought of Savonarola's appeal to heaven, or of other points in his carnival sermon, there can be no two opinions as to the conduct of those Compagnacci who showed their spite against the Friar and their contempt for religion by hustling the children as they walked in procession through the streets and casting their crosses into the Arno.

Florence was on the eve of a new election. Henceforth Savonarola would have to fight his battles without the support of a friendly Signory. But, whatever his mistakes or his faults may have been, it was at least not in any human power that he put his trust.

CHAPTER XV

THE DECLARATION OF WAR (LENT 1498)

"GUERRA a ferri puliti," war *à outrance*, is the dominant note of Fra Girolamo's sermons throughout the unfinished Lenten course of 1498. "Write to Rome," he exclaims, on Ash Wednesday, "that this Friar, with his followers, wishes to fight against you wicked men as we would fight against Turks, and that we wish to die and suffer martyrdom. I have a great desire to suffer martyrdom at your hands. O Lord, grant me this grace. O Rome, you think to frighten me; but I have no fear."[1] To the objection that it is vain-glorious to style himself a martyr, he replies that he does not claim this title, but wishes to deserve it.[2]

"War!" again, is his cry. A zealous preacher is like the war-horse described by Job, eager for the fray; and Christ is the rider, to every touch of whose guiding hand the steed is responsively obedient.[3]

It is in no mere spirit of bravado that the Friar hurls his defiance in the teeth of his enemies. His soul is stirred to its very depths by the sight of shameless corruption in high places, and of spiritual power abused and turned, as he is thoroughly convinced, to the ruin of souls.[4] The Church, he declares, has become a very sink of iniquity (una feccia).[5] If you want to be spiritually ruined, he says elsewhere, go to Rome. Formerly prelates had at least enough sense of shame to call their bastard offspring "nephews," now these nephews are recognised as sons.[6] He only wants "a Bull to authorise men to live well (una bolla da potere bene vivere)";[7] but as long as Papal documents have a purport which is quite the opposite of this, he will not cease to raise his voice in protest.

[1] S. 4. on Exodus. [2] S. 6. [3] S. 4.
[4] S. 22. [5] S. 11. [6] S. 12.
[7] S. 4. Again in S. 16 he says that if a religious wants to get a Bull authorising him to leave his Order, he can easily obtain it, but he can't get a document authorising him to live a virtuous life.

There can be no doubt, he declares, as to the character of the war in which he is engaged; they are the forces of Christ and of Satan which are opposed in battle array.

In a war men judge of the nationality of the combatants by their standards and by their weapons. The weapons of a Christian are faith, prayer, and patience; and these are the weapons which he and his followers employ. The weapons of Satan are furious hatred, blasphemy, and every kind of mischief. These are the weapons of his enemies. There ought, then, to be no hesitation as to which side a man should take. Those who, though they seem good, are not on his side, show themselves not to be truly good men, or they would not take part with the wicked. Let no one be misled by mere names. He is excommunicate in name, but it is not a man's name that shows us what he is, but his actions. Let who will watch the combat, and he will easily discover who is excommunicate indeed.[1]

An imaginary listener speaks a word of warning. "O Brother, take care what you are doing! He (*i.e.* the Pope) is a 'gran maestro.'" "Let him be as great as you please," is the preacher's reply, "I will have no peace with him if he does not live well." And then, addressing Alexander in person (though of course without naming him) he says: "If you wish to fight against me, you will fight as a pagan; for we live in a Christian manner, but your life is in opposition to Christ If I am a martyr, you will be a tyrant persecutor. I must needs act towards you as S. Ambrose did when he rebuked Theodosius for his sin."[2]

He tells the story of Jacopone da Todi, who, being invited to preach before "that wicked Pope, Boniface VIII.," went into the pulpit and exclaimed: "I marvel, I marvel, yea I marvel, that the earth does not open and swallow you up! May God be with you!" and went away without saying another word. Is there not, asks Fra Girolamo, more abundant cause for such marvel now?[3] Hearing that the Signory has received a Brief from the Pope concerning himself, and that the reply to be given thereto is under debate, he says:—

"You show too much kindness and considerateness (troppa clementia et rispetti) in your replies. Let me answer a word or two. I will thunder in their ears after such a fashion that they will hear indeed. The time draws near to open the casket, and if we do but turn the key, there will come forth such a stench from the Roman sink (tanta puzza, tanta feccia dalla città di Roma) that it will spread through all Christendom and every one will perceive it (puzzera ad ognuno)."[4]

The turning of the key, and the opening of the casket, have

[1] S. 4. [2] S. 6. [3] S. 19. [4] S. 5.

reference to his project for the calling of a council with a view to the deposition of the Pope and the reformation of the Church. To this project he more than once alludes in the course of these sermons, but always, it must be admitted, in a somewhat guarded manner.[1] But in his confident assertion that a terrible *dénouement* is at hand there is no manner of reserve. He will raise such a stir that his high placed adversaries will "jump out of bed."[2] Nay, even of their own sheer wickedness they will burst asunder, and all the foulness of their cruelty and malice will be made manifest ("tu scopperai le viscere e creppẽrai").[3]

The Brief, of which we shall have something to say presently, had styled Fra Girolamo "a son of iniquity," a needlessly offensive and cruelly unjust phrase which we have no desire to condone. What a saint would have said under such provocation—if a saint could be supposed to have drawn such provocation upon himself from such a quarter—we will not undertake to conjecture. Fra Girolamo bids his hearers "write to them that he whom you call by that name does not abandon himself to a licentious life" (we dare not translate the very words of the preacher), "but that he devotes himself to preaching the faith of Christ."[4]

The immediate effect of the Brief was to cause the Signory to forbid Savonarola to preach any longer in the Duomo. Accordingly, "after the example of Christ, who yielded before the malice of His enemies (che dette luogo all' ira)," he withdrew to S. Marco, where he begged that, by reason of the limited accommodation, men only would come to the sermons. However, at the earnest entreaty of the women not to be excluded altogether, Saturdays were reserved for them.[5]

The passage which we have last quoted occurs in the fifth sermon, but it was in the twenty-second, the last of the series, that the note of defiance is most loudly sounded. It happens in nature, says the preacher (whose system of natural philosophy need not here be criticised), that when particular causes fail of their due effect, the deficiency is supplied by causes of a more universal or elemental character.

"But if the elements themselves should become corrupted, what is then to be done? You must fly from them, or resist one element by

[1] *E.g.* in S. 13, *à propos* of Exod. iv. 29, "Congregaverunt omnes seniores filiorum Israel."

[2] S. 9. [3] S. 4. [4] S. 5. [5] S. 9.

means of another, as when tainted air is purified by fire. So also in the Church. If an individual religious, for instance, acts amiss, you must have recourse in turn to his Prior, to the Provincial, to the General, and last of all to the Pope; but if the Pope will not act (non li provede lui), and this universal cause should fail you, one must next have recourse to the Pope in heaven (al Papa celeste), that is, to Christ. . . . And if it should happen that these universal causes in the Christian commonwealth not only do not help, but are sources of corruption and exercise an evil influence to the detriment of the Church of Christ, what is to be done then? . . . One must resist this evil influence, one must pray and have recourse to Christ . . . every one must resist the evil influence. You say that we must not resist the ecclesiastical power; but I say that when power is used to the detriment of the Church it is no longer an ecclesiastical power, but an infernal power, the power of Satan."[1]

It is needless to pursue the quotation further. The reader has already had abundant evidence of the deeply-rooted conviction of the preacher, that war, war against an unworthy Pope, had become for him, and for all good men, a sacred duty. The war in which he is engaged is not merely in the cause of God, but it is carried on under divine leadership actively exercised.

"When you see the Pope's mules at a church door in Rome, you say, if you are familiar with Roman customs: 'The Pope is within.' So, when you hear the trumpets, and see the standards, and the guard of honour drawn up at the gates of a palace, you say: 'The Emperor is here.' In like manner the presence of God is to be known by His trumpets (of preaching), and His standards (of a good life), and His guard (of men of exemplary conduct). But now the trumpets sound to battle, and an expedition of the hosts of heaven is on foot. S. Peter and S. Paul and S. Gregory cry: 'To Rome!' S. John, S. Zenobius, and B. Antoninus cry: 'To Florence!' S. Ambrose prepares to march on Lombardy. S. Mark threatens Venice, 'the city of them that dwell amid the waters.' All are ready to chastise their several cities. And S. Benedict, S. Francis, and S. Dominic will swoop down upon their several Orders.[2] O Florence! the sack, *i.e.* the measure of your iniquities, is full. You must look for a terrible scourge. The Lord will bear witness that I and my brethren have tried our best to ward it off; but it cannot be done. We have prayed that the scourge might be commuted to a pestilence. Whether we have been heard or not you will see. Let every one confess and be prepared."[3]

The Book of Exodus, which Fra Girolamo had chosen as the subject of his discourses during this Lent, abounded in passages

[1] S. 22. [2] S. 19. [3] S. 4.

admirably adapted, or easily adaptable, to his purpose. "Almighty God," he says, "who Himself dictated this book, has put into it wonderful meanings."[1] The "spiritual sense," he declares, though founded on the literal, is not like it confined to one purport, but admits of application to ever-varying circumstances; and its application to the present time is obvious.[2]

"The story of Moses and Pharaoh repeats itself. 'Come, let us wisely oppress them,' said Pharaoh of the Israelites. Now, as then, the wicked think themselves wise; and the city chosen by God to be the recipient of His special graces is called 'foolish Florence, Friar Florence.' Pharaoh bade the midwives of Egypt to abuse their office, and destroy the male children of the Israelites. The 'gran maestri' of our day bid the preachers belie their function of bringing Christ again to the birth in the souls of men, and when they will not do so, oppress them with excommunications and every kind of persecution."[3] "The Egyptians 'afflicted and mocked' the Israelites. So do our adversaries to-day afflict you and mock you, calling you 'hypocrites and *pinzocheroni*,' and styling your red crosses 'mandrakes.'"[4] "Who hath appointed thee . . . judge over us?" said the Hebrew to Moses; and so say the "cattivi" to him.[5]

As, however, he does not use the name of Pharaoh to designate the Pope alone, but all the "cattivi" and "tepidi," so also he is careful to say that he does not liken himself to Moses in any exclusive sense. "Many others there are who are guided by the spirit of God."[6]

The shepherds who came and drove away the daughters of Raguel when they would have drawn water (Exod. ii. 17), are those wicked pastors who drive away the souls that belong to Christ. They forbid them to come to the sermons. "Tell these reverend sirs to come up into this pulpit themselves, and expound the Sacred Scriptures. Why, some of them can't even read the Bible! And I make bold to say that some of them could more easily discourse about eating and drinking and vice than about Holy Scripture."[7]

But Moses drove away these bad shepherds with blows, and himself watered the flock. "Listen to my blows. You priest! you prelate! Leave your mistresses and your shameless wickedness, your gluttony and your worldly display, and your dogs."[8] The dogs of the clergy, it may be observed in passing, appear to

[1] S. 4. [2] S. 9. [3] S. 4. [4] S. 6. [5] S. 7. [6] *Ibid.*

[7] S. 8. It will be understood that Fra Girolamo speaks with a degree of explicit plainness which, in an English translation, requires the use of paraphrastic generalities.

[8] *Ibid.*

have especially roused his indignation. "S. Gregory gave bread, not to dogs, but to the poor."[1] Again, Pharaoh kept the Israelites in slavery, engaged in servile works, and would not let them go forth to offer sacrifice. Moreover, he would provide no straw for the making of bricks for his buildings.

"If you wish to engage in the servile work of minding worldly things, Rome will not disturb you. Rome will allow you to accumulate plenty of riches, which are but as clay or mud, but hinders you from obtaining those means of grace, symbolised by the straw, which you need if you are to build a true spiritual edifice."[2]

"But now God says: 'I will deliver you from this slavery of wicked friars and wicked prelates.' Doubt not that God will lift up His mighty arm even unto Rome, and will deliver you in His mighty judgments. You priests who to-day bear yourselves so proudly will one day hide your tonsures for very shame. The scourge will surely come. 'Then,' saith the Lord, 'shall ye know me; and then will ye confess that it is not the Friar who has preached to you, but I myself.'"[3]

These words, to say nothing of others which have been already quoted, would alone be sufficient to show how fully Fra Girolamo maintained, to the very end of his public career, the character of an inspired prophet. If, he says, he chose to depart from Florence, and to trample conscience under foot, and to disobey the command laid upon him by God, he could easily escape all persecution. But he is as sure of his mission, and of the genuineness and truth of the divine message which he has to deliver, as he is that he stands in the pulpit, and that the tunic which he wears is white.[4] "What do you think we should do," he asks in his last sermon, "if this absolution were to come?" Would he recant? No. And why?

"Because we are ambassadors, and we cannot speak otherwise than according to our commission. An ambassador, when he speaks in his own name, may well show all humility and obeisance, but when he speaks in his master's name, he must utter his message with unshrinking firm-

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[1] S. 16.

[2] S. 15. More emphatic than any of these applications of Holy Scripture is the passage in which, implicitly comparing the Pope with Phassur, the High Priest who persecuted Jeremiah, Savonarola declares that this modern Phassur will come to a bad end. "E a te dico Phassur, che tu anderai in cattività di Babilonia, tu e gli habitatori di casa tua, e gli amici tuoi che ti saranno restati, *et hanno a morire di morte eterna nell' inferno*," etc. (S. 22).

[3] S. 16.

[4] *Ibid.*

ness. Think not that I will recant; may God preserve me from wavering if that absolution which they want should come."[1]

But perhaps the strangest, if not the strongest, passage bearing on this subject is one in which Fra Girolamo makes a somewhat bold application of the parable of the vineyard let out to husbandmen.

"God has sent His preachers into the vineyard. But how many there are who in these days seek to slay His preachers. Wherefore at last God has sent His Son. Who is this? He is the Truth, for He Himself has said: 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.' God, then, has sent the Truth, and has said: 'Perchance they will fear my Son.' But they want to drive the Truth away; and I warn you that it is not the Friar whom they seek to drive away, but Christ. Believe me it is so. And do thou, O Rome, mark well my words: Auferetur a vobis regnum—the kingdom shall be taken from you; Christ will take the Church from your hands, and will give it to good husbandmen who will turn it to good account. Videbitis cito—you will see that this will soon come to pass."[2]

This comparison or identification of the prophetic "truth," as declared by himself, with the Son of God, by contrast with ordinary preaching is, to say the least, remarkable. He is as confident as ever of the approaching conversion of the Turks. As God rejected the Jews and called the Gentiles, so now He will reject the West, and call into His Church the nations of the East.[3]

A considerable portion of this last series of sermons is taken up with the topics, now familiar to the reader, of Savonarola's defence of his own conduct.

His enemies wish to burn his books, as Sabinianus, the unworthy successor of S. Gregory, would have burnt those of the great Doctor, saying that he had ruined the Church by his alms.[4] But if they burn his books they will be burning an exposition of the Christian faith.[5] It would be more to the purpose if they would read his books before condemning them, as S. Augustine was always careful to read the works even of heretical writers.[6] They charge him with having spoken ill of the Pope, but he has never named any one. His words, as he long since warned his hearers, are like hail that falls upon the earth. If any one wishes not to be struck, let him keep under cover.[7] There is one (*i.e.* Fra Mariano) who has spoken outrageously of the Pope in times past, and whom he himself has publicly reproved on that very account. But now that other preacher is in high favour; a sure sign that his tirade against the Pope did not proceed from God, but from the desire to please a human master.[8] They charge him with having declared that he is a prophet, and that he

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[1] S. 22. [2] S. 20. [3] S. 9. [4] S. 16.
[5] S. 18. [6] S. 10. [7] S. 18. [8] *Ibid.*

cannot be lawfully prohibited from prophesying. But he has only said in general terms that a law against prophesying cannot be validly enacted, because this would be to limit the power of God.[1] He has not said that every one is bound to believe his predictions, but only that men are bound not obstinately to contradict them.[2] Of course, due approval is necessary, but this he has.[3]

His meaning seems to be that he commenced to preach with due authority, and that the authority which has since inhibited his preaching is, to this extent at least, null. If it be said that a papal Brief has prohibited his preaching, he answers that the Brief is not truly papal. A Pope as Pope could not issue such a Brief, any more than a Christian as a Christian can commit sin.[4] As for the project of union, this is only a device of his enemies to drive him away from Florence.[5]

But are not many of his prophecies in fact unfulfilled? Those who raise this objection should remember that God works slowly.[6] Joseph waited fourteen years, Moses forty; it is only eight years since he began to prophesy.[7] People mocked Isaiah because the fulfilment of his predictions seemed to be indefinitely delayed: and so it has ever been with God's prophets. Again, the sun hardly seems to move, because you see it from a distance; but if you were to approach it you would see how it moves. So, too, God moves, or rather works, slowly to our eyes, but most surely in fact.[8]

And yet, though God works slowly to his own appointed ends, the preacher-prophet clings to the belief that the things which he has predicted will soon come to pass. "Videbimus cito" is still the burden of his prophecy. The signs of the times point to a speedy issue. The circumstances of the day are like to those "when this Scripture was written." "Now, that is to say *cito*, *presto*, shall Pharaoh be punished; the scourge draws near to these ecclesiastics, I tell you that it hastens marvellously (che 'l si appropinqua mirabilmente)."[9]

A curious feature of his apology for his own prophetic mission is the recognition that he was not the only prophet in the field; and the test whereby he discriminates his prophecies from those of others is worthy of note. He remembers in his boyhood to have heard men predict things to come; yet no one interfered with them.[10] And still more recently, many have uttered prophecies and no one finds fault. This is a sign that such predictions were not of God.

[1] S. 5. [2] S. 10. [3] S. 9. [4] *Ibid.* [5] S. 5.
[6] S. 16. [7] S. 5. [8] S. 7. [9] S. 16. [10] S. 18.

But his predictions have been productive of good results, they have powerfully contributed to the introduction of a virtuous life, and therefore he has been persecuted.

The prediction of future things has not of its own nature any tendency to excite persecution. It is only when such predictions produce a genuine amendment of life that the wicked are impelled to suppress them.[1] Jeremiah, who prophesied evil of Jerusalem, was persecuted by Phassur the High Priest, who was "a great liar," and who excommunicated the prophet, and put him in the stocks by night; but when day dawned the prophet came forth again and said the same things as before.[2] Men demand a miracle as a "sign" that his prophecies are genuine. But they would do well to remember our Lord's words: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh a sign," and to bear in mind that neither Jeremiah nor S. John the Baptist worked any miracle. The true signs are those of which he has so often spoken, viz. the production of good results, and the consequent persecution. These are the true seal of the divine approval.

But although passages such as those which have been quoted or summarised above may fairly be regarded as characteristic of Fra Girolamo's last sermons, yet there are not wanting others which more unmistakably show the true moral greatness of the man, and which compel admiration quite independently of any possible divergencies of opinion with regard to his prophetic gifts, and to the defiant attitude which he now held towards the Pope. The eighth sermon, for instance, contains a really splendid encomium of faith as conferring on the creature a participation in the immutability of the Creator.

"God alone moves without being Himself moved; in Him alone there is no composition—to use the language of the schools—between potentiality and act, but He is all pure act. And the more nearly any creature approaches to God, and the more closely he is united with Him, the more that creature participates in the immutability of God. If you have chosen God as your end, seek all those means which may lead you to God and establish you in Him; and, having reached Him, cling to Him and embrace Him. . . . Now, my friends, what is that which establishes the heart of man in God? We have learned alike from experience, from reason, and from authority, that nothing but faith can ever establish the heart in God. And not only does faith strengthen the heart, but it renders it so firm that it has made very many even to rejoice in the midst of the torments of martyrdom."[3]

And the preacher goes on to point the moral by dwelling on the

[1] S. 18. [2] S. 22. [3] S. 8.

firmness and the joyful spirit manifested by his own followers in the midst of present tribulations and persecutions. In similar terms he speaks of the effects of charity.

Scattered through the sermons are remarks which show him possessed of a shrewd mother-wit, of a sense of humour which helps him to pierce the outward semblance of things, and lay bare the inner reality. The devotion to S. Francis and S. Dominic which has shown itself in the building of splendid convents, on the walls of which the arms and heraldic devices of the munificent founders are everywhere conspicuous, this kind of devotion is not all genuine, but too often proceeds from vain-glory, and from a desire to gain the subservient allegiance even of monks and friars. S. Paul said that he who desired a bishopric desired a good work; but there is no need to exhort any one to seek a bishopric now, in days when the pastoral staff has become too precious to strike with. Again, good religious do not wander about engaging in gossip with every one they meet. If any one should see one of his community gossiping in the Piazza, let them throw a councillor's cloak over the friar's shoulders, and invite him to the Pratica.[1] Some of these prelates, he says, make a boast of being able to absolve from every kind of sin, "reserved cases," and so forth. But if Christ does not ratify the absolution, of what use is it? In connection with the charge made against Savonarola of teaching and enforcing an exaggerated asceticism, it may be of interest to note a passage in the seventh sermon in which he warns his hearers that natural means must be used to attain natural ends. They must not stand with their arms folded. "When you rise in the morning, give thanks to God. Then go to Church to hear Mass. But you must not stay there all day on your knees. After Mass, go about your business, public or private," etc.

The most beautiful of all the sermons is the last but one of the series, preached on Saturday, 17th March, and addressed—as were the other Saturday sermons—to an audience of women. Its subject is the Psalm, "How lovely are Thy tabernacles (or tents), O Lord of Hosts!" Taking up the language of Canticles, he describes the soul as engaged in an earnest search for the Beloved.

"Perhaps He is to be found 'in tabernaculis pastorum—in the shepherds' tents.' What are the tents of God? Surely His creatures,

[1] S. 5.

for in them He dwells. The soul, then, may be imagined as wandering through creation, lifting up, as she goes along, the flap or lappel of each tent, seeking if the Beloved be there. Convents and religious houses, these are, or should be, God's tents of war. But alas! in how many of them may He be sought in vain. Again, the Psalmist exclaims: 'The sparrow has found herself a house.' The mind of man, like a bird seeking where to build her nest, ranges over the world, seeking rest in philosophy, in literature, in science, and so forth, but in God alone can it find true repose. He is enough, let it seek no other. 'And the turtle a nest where it may lay its young.' So, too, the will of man seeks its object here, there, and everywhere, but in God alone can it find that which satisfies it."

The steps by which the Hebrew pilgrim proposes to mount to the divine sanctuary on Sion ("ascensiones in corde suo disposuit") are illustrated—strangely, as it may seem to the modern reader—by the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer; while the blessings which he confidently hopes to receive ("etenim benedictionem dabit legislator") are brought into relation with the successive blessings pronounced by God on the several stages of the work of creation as recorded in Genesis i. The words "Protector noster aspice in nos," etc., afford the text for a peroration which was broken off, as Vivoli tells us, by the sobs and cries of "Misericordia" which spontaneously burst from the entire crowd of his hearers.

"I can say no more, but only weep. I would fain melt away with love, here in this pulpit. I do not ask Thee, O Lord, to hear us for our merits, but for Thy own goodness, and out of regard for Thy Son. 'Look upon the face of Thy Christ.' . . . Many prayers have been offered, and will still be offered on all sides; Thou, O Lord, hast promised to hear them. . . . But do not now limit Thine action to lesser matters (non star piu a queste cose basse) set Thine hand now to great things (a cose magne et a cose grandi); have compassion on Thy poor little flock (le tue pecorelle), whom Thou seest here all afflicted and persecuted. Thou art their Shepherd, dost Thou not wish them well, O Lord? . . . If I am no longer of any use for this work, take my life! If I am a hindrance to it, take, O Lord, my life, and slay me. But what have these Thy poor sheep done? They have done no evil. I am the sinner; look not upon my sins, but look upon Thine own sweetness, Thine own compassion (al petto tuo, alle viscere tue), and show us Thy mercy. Mercy, O Lord, Mercy!"

It was at this point that the tempest of tears broke forth, which Vivoli has so feelingly recorded.

RESID. DENVER.

CHAPTER XVI

THE POPE AND THE SIGNORY

WE have given an almost exhaustive summary of the discourses delivered by Fra Girolamo, from the time when, after his long silence, he resumed the ministry of preaching, till the day when he bade a final farewell to his devoted hearers. We now resume our calendar of letters on the subject of the Friar, which had already been brought down to the commencement of February 1498. The documents for the most part speak for themselves, and require little in the way of note or comment.

1*st February;* Manfredi to d'Este.[1]—You remember how, in the course of last summer, Fra Girolamo was suspended and excommunicated, for which cause he has until lately abstained from all public exercise of ecclesiastical functions, in the hope (?) that the Pope would absolve him in view of his justification. But, perceiving that there was no prospect of such a change, on last Christmas Day he publicly sang High Mass, and with his own hands communicated all the brethren of his convent, and a great number of the faithful of both sexes. And now, as Lent is drawing nigh, and as he has been invited to preach in S. Reparata (the Duomo), it is said that he has decided to commence the sermons somewhat before Lent, and, accordingly, the work of preparing the benches and tribunes, for the accommodation of the crowds who flock to hear him, is being actively pushed on. This has given occasion to much talk, especially on the part of the Friar's enemies. So I went to see him, in a convent of his outside the city (S. Domenico at Fiesole), in order to ascertain his intentions. He told me he had quite made up his mind to preach during this Lent, and perhaps somewhat sooner, in case a wish to this effect should be signified by those who have the right to command him. I asked him whether he was awaiting orders from the Pope, or from the Signory. He replied that he would not be induced to undertake this work by command of the Signory, nor even by command of the Pope, considering the evil life of the latter (vedutolo continuare nel modo di vivere che' l fa), and that he was well aware that the Pope made no

[1] Cappelli, n. 142.

secret of his determination not to withdraw the excommunication. The upshot was that he awaited the commands of *One who was superior to the Pope and to all creatures.* But he would not tell me or any one else on what day he proposed to begin. He added that he made no account of the excommunication, the injustice of which, and the whole truth concerning it, would, he hoped, soon be made manifest. I spoke to him of the murmurs in the city, and of the scandal which might arise. He said that if he believed the excommunication to be valid he would most scrupulously observe it; nor would he preach were he not "more than certain" that no scandal would arise.

8th February; Same to same.[1]—"Our Fra Hieronymo" has determined to preach next Sunday. There is great diversity of opinion on the subject. "We will await the issue of the affair, whereby it will be possible to form a better judgment as to the grounds of his action, whether they be divine or human."

13th February; Same to same.[2]—Fra H. did preach, and had a great audience. Among other "notable and memorable things," he brought forward many strong reasons for holding that the excommunication was not valid, and he once more affirmed that all his predictions would absolutely be fulfilled. Manfredi will try to get a copy of the sermon, and will send it to d'Este. There is great division and opposition of views, especially among the canons of the Cathedral. We shall see what the Pope thinks and does, especially as Savonarola intends to continue preaching.

13th February; Somenzi to Sforza.[3]—Fra H. da Ferrara preached in the great church on Sunday morning, without caring to wait longer for absolution from his Holiness. The sum of his discourse was that the excommunication was invalid, and that therefore no account should be made of it. In confirmation of this he turned to the crucifix which he had on the pulpit, and prayed that if ever he should acknowledge this sentence, or seek absolution from it, Christ would not forgive him his sins. Then he bade his followers to be of good heart and to fear nothing, for they would certainly be victorious over their enemies; and declared that everything which he had predicted would come to pass without fail. The Signory have yielded to him in everything; so much so that whereas the Vicar of the Archbishop (Pagagnotti, himself a Dominican) had caused an admonition to be read in all the parish churches to the effect that whoever went to hear Fra Jeronimo would be excommunicate, the Signory have reprimanded him, and forbidden him to exercise his office (che'l non vadi piu a bancha, nè exerciti più l'officio suo in cosa alchuna). Whereby it is clearly understood that the Signori, or at least a majority of them, have been the cause of the Friar's preaching.

17th February; Bonsi to the Ten.[4]—This evening the Bishop of

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[1] Cappelli, n. 143.
[2] *Ibid.*, 144.
[3] Villari, ii. Append. p. l.
[4] Marchese, n. 18.

Parma (Stefano Taverna), the Ambassador of the Duke of Milan, has called, and has told me that it is well known here that Fra G. preached last Sunday, and that a Cardinal of very great authority strongly condemned this conduct, saying that he was well aware that the Vicar has been forbidden by the Signory (pel publico) to exercise his office because he had opposed this preacher. The Bishop assured me that he had done his best to make excuses on behalf of the city to this Cardinal, and that he will continue to do so, but that he greatly regrets that at so critical a time so grave a cause of offence should have been given, and that so favourable an opportunity should have been afforded to our numerous enemies to stir up the anger of the Pope and of the whole court. His Lordship urges that it would be well for the Signory to write to the Pope, and to make whatever excuse can be made. He tells me that Monsignor Aschanio (Cardinal Sforza) recommends the same. The writer concludes by expressing his sense of the gravity of the situation, and by asking for instructions.

21*st February;* Taverna to Sforza.[1]—After relating the fact of Savonarola's preaching, and the affair of the Vicar, the writer declares that the matter has been made the most of by certain Cardinals in conversation with the Pope, who is greatly incensed. He has done his best to mitigate the Pope's anger, and has had a conversation with the Florentine ambassador (Bonsi), urging him to exhort the Florentines to act after a different fashion. Bonsi expressed his annoyance at the turn which affairs are taking, and promised to write at once as the case required.

22*nd February;* Bonsi to the Ten.[2]—I have had an audience of the Pope together with Bracci, the Cardinal of Perugia being present. After hearing what I had been commissioned by the Signory to say (relatively to the affairs of Pisa), the Pope wished to know whether you had made up your minds to resist the King of France, if he should come into Italy. I told him it was enough that you should promise to be "good Italians"; more than this I could not say. Then his Holiness replied that he knew very well you were determined not to dissociate yourselves from the King, and suddenly rising, he would not hear another word. As he left the room he turned to me and said: "Let Fra Girolamo preach forsooth! I should never have believed that you would have treated me so (Fate pure predicare a Fra G., etc)." So away he went, leaving Ser Alexandro and myself quite nonplussed. The Signory may now see how things stand, and what are their hopes in this quarter. I await instructions what to do next.

The letter concludes with the relation of an audacious attempt made on the ambassador's house, a few days previously, by a certain Sienese. The motive may have been robbery, or something worse may have been intended. The burglar, or would-be assassin, appears

[1] Villari, ii. Append. p. li. [2] Gherardi, p. 178.

to have powerful friends at his back. Such is the security of life and property in Rome.

23*rd February;* The Ten to Bonsi.[1]—As you know the facts of the case, viz. that Fra H. is preaching, and as we have the greatest confidence in your prudence, and because, as you may well conjecture, *this is a matter which surpasses the limits of mere nature* (questa essere opera che excede li termini naturali), we leave everything to your discretion ; and we desire you to thank the Bishop of Parma, and everyone else who may be helpful, in the name of the city.

From this point onwards Bonsi and the Ten will be found to be in great measure at cross purposes. Bonsi, who had gone to Rome as a firm supporter of Savonarola, now saw plainly that the case was hopeless, at least from a diplomatic point of view. It is clear that from henceforth he found his mission thoroughly distasteful, and the attempt on his property, or more probably on his life, to which he refers in several subsequent letters, but which need not be again touched upon here, did not tend to allay his irritation. The Ten, on the other hand, are not merely convinced of the justice of Fra Girolamo's cause, but they are persuaded that, as he holds his commission from God, his case demands quite exceptional treatment. Their strong feelings on this point seem to have blinded them to the common-sense arguments of the ambassador. To have determined on open resistance to the Pope would have been to take an intelligible course ; but to expect the Pope to condone their support of Fra Girolamo in opposition to his express commands was rather foolish, as Bonsi, a little later, did not hesitate to tell them.

25*th February;* Bonsi to the Ten.[2]—Understanding that the Pope had been speaking in very honourable terms of our affairs to the Bishop of Arezzo (Cosimo de' Pazzi) who has recently arrived here, I sought an audience this morning in the hopes of finding some favourable opening. The Pope called me to him, with Ser Alexandro (Bracci), and we saw him in company with Perugia, Borgies (*sic*), and two others. He began by speaking of his favourable dispositions towards Florence, and expressed his surprise that the Signory should make so little account of him as to allow Fra G. to preach, especially considering the manner of his preaching ; and then he repeated to me a great part of what he understood that the Friar had said on the 11th inst. Neither Turk nor infidel, he declared, would tolerate such conduct, and he charged me to

[1] Gherardi, p. 179. This is a reply to his letter of the 17th, summarised above.

[2] Gherardi, p. 180.

send a special messenger to warn you that he will place the whole city under an interdict if efficacious means are not forthwith taken to put a stop to the sermons. He spoke of Fra G. in the strongest terms, and with extreme indignation, and repeated that if he did not desist before the beginning of Lent, the interdict would most certainly be declared. And he had chosen to say this in the presence of their prelates in order that it might be clearly understood that he would by no means change his mind. And although Ser Alexandro and I did our best to urge what reasons we could, we were so severely rebuked, and so constantly interrupted, that we could make no way at all. Then his Holiness caused some scurrilous epigrams (sonecti) which had come from Florence to be read aloud, and bitterly complained that he should be made the theme of ballad-mongers (Io debbo essere così messo in sonecti!). We said that if such things were laid to the charge of Fra G. it was a calumny. He, however, went back to what he had already affirmed (about the interdict), and insisted on my sending off the special messenger at once. And in fact it is quite useless to insist on the virtues of the Friar or his reasons and arguments (sua fondamenti), for they make no impression here. In a word, it is necessary that you should act with the utmost promptness if you wish to escape the interdict. After leaving the Palace, I had yours of the 23rd. As for what you say of the supernatural character of Fra Girolamo's work, no one in Rome can be persuaded of this; nor is it of any use to attempt to secure the support of any one here, especially of such as have heard what he has said against the Pope. And there are always plenty of people eager to kindle the flame of indignation against him (che mecte stoppa et zolfanelli, etc.). I understand your solicitude that I should be sparing of expense in correspondence, and it is only at the Pope's urgent command, and much against my will, that I now send a special messenger. Be good enough to send your letters in such form that they can be shown to the Pope, according to the usage of this court.

26*th February;* Same to same.[1]—Sends two Briefs, the contents of which he has been unable to learn.

26*th February:* The Pope to the Signory.[2]—Recounts how, having long since heard of "the grave and pernicious errors of that son of iniquity, Fra Hieronymo Savonarola of Ferrara," he had summoned him to Rome, had forbidden him to preach, and had commanded him to submit to the union of S. Marco with the Roman or Tuscan Congregation, and how in view of his continued disobedience he had commanded that he should be publicly declared excommunicate and regarded as such, and that he should therefore be avoided by all. Now he hears that, disregarding these precepts, Fra H. continues to preach, alleging false reasons to show that he is not excommunicate, and affirming (damnabiliter affirmando) many things to the prejudice of the Catholic faith and the authority of the Holy See; and, moreover, that he

[1] Gherardi, p. 180.

[2] Villari, ii. Append. p. lxvi.

does not hesitate to take part in public processions and to say Mass and administer Holy Communion; and further that very many of the citizens resort to his sermons, and in various ways show him favour and support, and this with the permission of the Signory, from whom better things might have been expected. We therefore strictly command you to send Fra Hieronymo to us, promising that if he shall come, and shall show himself penitent (ad cor rediret), we will—both for your sake and because we will not the death of the sinner, etc.—receive and treat him kindly. Or at the least we command you to confine him "as a rotten member" in some private place, where he may be cut off from all communication with others. And if these precepts be not observed, and you continue to support him (hominem ita pernitiosum, excommunicatum et publico nuntiatum ac de hæresi suspectum), we shall lay your city under an interdict, or even proceed to more severe measures.

27th February; Bonsi to the Ten.[1]—He has had an audience, and has heard the substance of the Brief. His Holiness added that *if Fra G. would obey, and would abstain from preaching after a short time he would absolve him from all censures.* This he repeated, repeating also his threats, and this with such indignation that it is plain that if the Friar does not obey, all our attempts to justify his conduct will go for nothing.

27th February; Somenzi to Sforza.[2]—To-day, being the Carnival day, the Friar has caused a procession to be made, after the same fashion as in recent years, in which the greater part of the people took part; but many went rather out of curiosity than from devotion. The followers of the Friar each carried an olive branch that they might be known from the rest. After a somewhat detailed description of the ceremony, including the bonfire, the writer relates the attempts of the Compagnacci (certi giovani cittadini, di quelli sono adversarii del Frate, etc.) to interrupt the proceedings and destroy the pyramid of vanities, attempts which were frustrated by the guard appointed by the Signory. The enemies of the Friar are, however, in high spirits, for the new Signory (which was to enter upon its term of office on 1st March) is composed of five, or perhaps six, who are hostile to him, as against three who belong to the party of his supporters. The writer concludes by apologising for troubling his master with such trumpery matters.

1st March; Bonsi to the Ten.[3]—After a long paragraph about the affair of Pisa, the writer records how the Venetian Ambassador has told the Pope that he may judge, from the license accorded to Fra G., in what esteem his Holiness is held by the Florentines. But the Pope replied that if only the Florentines would act in accordance with a Brief which he had just sent, this business would not greatly trouble him.

2nd March; Same to same.[4]—The Pope is most favourably disposed, and desirous that Pisa should be restored, and as for the efforts of the Venetian Ambassador to stir up bad blood by referring to the affair of

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[1] Gherardi, p. 183.
[2] Villari, ii. Append. p. li.
[3] Gherardi, p. 184.
[4] Gherardi, p. 185.

Savonarola, his Holiness is determined that no insult to himself personally shall cause him to oppose the common good of Italy, especially as he takes for granted that the Signory will obey his commands as set forth in the Brief.

2nd March; Somenzi to Sforza.[1]—Yesterday the new Signory entered on their new term of office, of whom six are hostile to the Friar. The Pope has sent a Brief to the Signory, etc. Also another to the Canons of the Cathedral, ordering them to make it publicly known that all who have incurred censures by going to hear the Friar's sermons, may be absolved on condition that they will take an oath not to go again. These Canons are to be appointed with faculties to absolve *in casu*. But any one who shall thereafter go to hear Fra H. shall be *ipso facto* excommunicate, and the censure is "reserved" to his Holiness. The Friar, hearing of this, has of his own accord ceased to preach in the Cathedral, and has betaken himself to S. Marco, whither, however, the majority of his former hearers now resort, and among them the ambassador of the Duke of Ferrara (Manfredi), and the whole of the Ten and the Eight, together with others of the city officials.[2] A Pratica has been held upon the Pope's Brief, and the issue of the debate was, that the Signory should reply that they had not thought it well to take any fresh steps in the matter, persuaded as they are that the Pope would not have written as he has done if he had been aware of the virtuous life of the Friar, and of the admirable fruits of moral reformation brought about by his preaching. They can take no action against him unless some scandal should arise, and therefore they pray the Pope to hold them excused. As for his having preached false doctrine, this is a calumny. This letter, adds Somenzi, has been written in the name of the Signory, and the Signory has given its consent solely—so far as he can understand—in order that the Pope may be instigated to take more effective measures, and that the lie may thus be given to those who go about saying that his Holiness does not act *proprio motu* in this affair. They think, also, that if the Pope does issue an interdict their hands will be greatly strengthened, and they will be able to proceed against Fra H. with a greater show of justice, and with greater vigour.[3]

The minutes of the Pratica of which Somenzi speaks, have been published by Lupi,[4] and it is plain from them that a majority were in

[1] Villari, p. liii.

[2] The Ten and the Eight held office for a longer period than the Signory. Hence it might happen that, as was now actually the case, the Signory and the Ten (or the Eight) might represent opposite political parties.

[3] The Pratica was held on 3rd March, and the letter of the Signory was sent on the same day. On the other hand, Somenzi's letter bears the date 2nd March, and must have been commenced on that day, as its opening words ("Heri intrò la Signoria nova," etc.) clearly imply. The apparent discrepancy is explained if we suppose that the letter was not finished and despatched until a day or two later.

[4] Lupi, p. 30.

favour of representations being made to the Pope on behalf of Fra Girolamo. The reasons given are various. The Pope has been misinformed; he does not specify any false doctrine in particular; the demands of his Holiness are dishonourable to the city—he would not, it is averred, have written in this style to the citizens of Perugia; the Brief has been obtained by the enemies of Florence; and lastly, to carry out its prescriptions would lead to a tumult, such is the popularity of the Friar. Whether the motives which induced the Signory to allow such a letter as that which follows to be written in their name were really those which Somenzi ascribes to them, it is obviously impossible now to determine. But subsequent letters of Sforza's agents suggest that some at least of their magnificent lordships were quite capable of this meanness.

3rd March; The Signory to the Pope.[1]—As soon as Savonarola received news of the Brief of your Holiness, wherein he is called a "son of iniquity," he immediately withdrew from the cathedral to his own monastery, in the hope that your anger would be mitigated, when you should understand that the accusations laid to his charge are false. We can bear witness that he is an admirable worker in the Lord's vineyard, and one who has gathered therefrom such fruits as none other has been able to gather. For eight years he has preached in our midst, foretelling future things, and effecting a great moral reformation, whereby he has stirred up against himself the enmity of many perverse men, who never cease to multiply false accusations against him. We regret to be unable to comply with the demands of your Holiness (1) by reason of the debt of gratitude which we owe to a man who has deserved well of us, and which it would be dishonourable to the city to disown; (2) because we could not take steps against him without the greatest danger of popular disturbances. We acknowledge the goodwill of your Holiness towards us, whereof we have recently had gratifying assurances through our ambassador, and we pray you not to be incensed against a city so loyal to you, and not to insist upon our doing that which would be to our grievous detriment.

Same date; The Ten to Bonsi.[2]—While forwarding through him the answer of the Signory to the Pope, they take the opportunity of confirming what is said in that document by their own testimony to the admirable fruits produced by Savonarola's preaching. The worst results are to be feared if his Holiness allows himself to be persuaded by the false insinuations of their enemies to insist upon the execution of his demands. Such a course will neither tend to the general welfare of

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[1] Marchese, n. 19. Gherardi, p. 186, points out that the above is the true date.

[2] Gherardi, p. 187.

Italy, nor will it further, so far as the writers can see, any private and personal interest of his Holiness.

Same date; The Same to Pepi.[1]—Informs him of what has recently taken place in regard of Savonarola, and of the answer made by the Signory to the Brief. If the Duke (Sforza) is misinformed on these matters, Pepi is to let him know the truth.

7th March; Bonsi to the Ten.[2]—Having received the letters of the 3rd inst., and the reply of the Signory to the Pope, he went at once with Bracci to seek an audience. On the way they met the Cardinal of Perugia, who expressed a doubt whether the Pope would be satisfied with such an answer, but recommended them to execute their commission. The Pope made the Bishop of Parma (Sforza's envoy) read aloud the letter of the Signory, and declared that he was astonished at such a reply. It was, he said, a wicked letter (una trista lettera), and one which belied its own expressions of loyalty. As for his being misinformed about Savonarola's preaching, his sermons were in print, and he had read in them the passages in which Fra G. made light of the excommunication, and spoke of him as "a broken tool," and said that he would rather go to hell than seek absolution, and reproached him with the death of his son (the Duke of Gandia).[3] As for the withdrawal of the Friar to S. Marco, in the first place this was not done by order of the Signory; and secondly, the withdrawal was of no effect if he continued to preach at S. Marco. Moreover, the letter gave no guarantee that he would not return to the Duomo. He would, then, be quite justified in forthwith declaring the interdict; nevertheless, he would give them another chance, but if they did not obey at once, the interdict would certainly be declared. We did our best to speak in the Friar's defence, praising his life and doctrine; but the Pope said that he did not find fault with sound doctrine, but with obstinate disobedience, and contempt of the Holy See. As for the reasons alleged against the validity of the excommunication, he only ridiculed them (facevasi beffe). Accordingly, adds Bonsi, there is nothing for it but to make good use of the short time that is left to you for submission, otherwise the interdict will surely be pronounced. Parma, who stayed with the Pope after we had left, declared to us on oath that there is no other way out of the difficulty but to make some show of obedience by putting a stop to the sermons for a time, or by somehow inducing the Friar to seek for absolution. If only this can be done, *the Pope will not thereafter refuse him permission to preach.* You must understand that the whole court is against us, and Parma tells me that Piero de' Medici and the Venetian ambassador are both doing their utmost (offerendo al Papa partiti).

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[1] Gherardi, p. 188. Francesco Pepi was the Florentine ambassador at the Court of Milan.

[2] Marchese, n. 20.

[3] All this is to be found in the sermons preached on Septuagesima and Sexagesima Sundays 1498 (*supra*, chap. xiv.).

The Pope is persuaded that the letter of the Signory was dictated by Fra G. The style, he said, was just his. Of course we said we did not believe that it was so. In a word, we are falling more and more deeply into disgrace.

9th March; The Same to the Signory.[1]—The Pope has addressed another Brief to your Lordships, which I send, as commanded, by special messenger. It is now absolutely necessary that you should satisfy his Holiness, who has declared to me that if only Fra Girolamo will obey, and will cease from preaching for a while, *he will absolve him, and suffer him to preach again.* But if he goes on with your permission, and especially if he continues to speak contemptuously of the Pope, there is no hope whatever; and if you are going to resist the Pope in this matter, you might as well recall your ambassador. Capaccio is doing his best for you, and except for this matter the Pope is well disposed. Pray write him a submissive letter, and thank him for his goodwill towards the city.

Same date; The Pope to the Signory.—Your reply to our Brief has filled us with astonishment. You speak in defence of Fra H., but as good Catholics you ought first to have obeyed, and then, if you wished to do so, you might have recommended him to our favour. As for what you say about his virtuous life and the fruits of his preaching, *these things we have never disapproved, nor do we now disapprove them. On the contrary, we greatly commend such good works, which are most pleasing to us; but we condemn his obstinacy, and his pride, and his mischievous boldness,* which he shows in contemning ecclesiastical censures, and in leading others to contemn them, so that he has infected almost the whole city with the poison of his evil example. The Pope goes on to speak of the "vain and sophistical arguments" whereby the Friar presumes to support his contention that the sentence is null and void, and to condemn his asseveration that he would rather be lost eternally than seek absolution. "You must not," he adds, "allow yourselves to suppose that we have been led to pronounce sentence upon him by malicious suggestions. What you have written about him inspires us with sentiments of paternal love and compassion, but we grieve that he has been misled by we know not what spirit of pride into his present contumacious course of action. The keys were given by Christ to S. Peter *principaliter;* wherefore whoever declares himself to be independent of ecclesiastical censures, cuts himself off entirely from Christ. You must not wonder, then, if, having tolerated him so far, we can do so no longer. Wherefore, for the last time, we warn and command you either to send him to us forthwith, or to confine him in his monastery in such a fashion that he shall hold no intercourse with any one until, brought to a better mind, he shall deserve absolution. If you act otherwise you will not be consulting either your own interests or that of Fra Hieronymo."

[1] Gherardi, p. 192. We omit a short letter written on 7th March to the Signory. It only confirms what Burlamacchi says at much greater length to the Ten.

10*th March;* Cardinal Ascanio Sforza to the Duke of Milan.[1]—You have already been informed of the vehement indignation of his Holiness concerning the sermons and most wicked conduct (opere piene di iniquità !) of Fra H. at Florence. After speaking of the efforts made to mitigate the Pope's anger, and of the first Brief, the writer goes on to speak of letters "de una mala natura" received by the Pope from Savonarola himself, which put the Pope into such a state of commotion, that Parma could with difficulty calm him. I am deeply grieved, he adds, to see the effects of all the good offices of the Pope towards the Florentines threatened with destruction in consequence of this affair. As for me, I have recently persuaded the Pope to send another Brief in order to help forward the good work of crushing the wickedness of Fra Hieronymo (!).

It might perhaps be concluded from the above that Savonarola's letter, which we shall presently quote, was really despatched some days earlier than the date (13th March) which it bears. But it seems to us more probable that Ascanio misunderstood some reported words of the Pope, which really had reference to former letters of Fra Girolamo, as if they had been occasioned by a document recently received. For the rest Ascanio's letter is a specimen, which it would not be easy to better, of the base hypocrisy with which men, themselves steeped in vice, and a disgrace to their ecclesiastical calling, could hold up their hands in pious horror at the "wickedness" of the preacher, misguided though one may believe him to have been.

10*th March;* The Ten to Bonsi.[2]—We are greatly rejoiced to hear of the kind words spoken by the Pope about Fra H. But now we understand that on the presentation of the reply to his Brief (that of 26th February), his Holiness showed himself somewhat displeased (essersi di nuovo alquanto risentita). Therefore we exhort you to use your best efforts to represent matters in a favourable light, so that the Pope may understand that the words used by Savonarola do not go beyond what is customary with zealous preachers (!). The rest of the letter is chiefly concerned with Pisa.

16*th March;* Bonsi to the Ten.[3]—He would very much like to be gifted with such perspicacity as would enable him to perceive in their letters reasons strong enough to make good their cause. They speak of being rejoiced to hear of the favourable terms in which the Pope has spoken of Fra G. It will be time to rejoice when Fra G. has shown his obedience by remaining silent at least for a time. Considering that, if

[1] Villari, p. lv. Ascanio was Lodovico's brother, an ecclesiastic of scandalous life, like too many of his contemporaries.

[2] Gherardi, p. 197. This letter was written, of course, before the arrival of the Brief of 9th March.

[3] Gherardi, p. 198.

he fails to do this, the interdict will certainly follow, the writer quite fails to see what grounds they have for rejoicing. It is impossible that what they write should satisfy his Holiness. As for arguments to prove the nullity of the censure, every one here rejects and ridicules them. You must not suppose that the authorities will allow their powers to be called in question, which powers are exercised for the most part in the infliction of censures.[1] The printed sermons of the Friar have so exasperated the minds of men here, that there is absolutely no remedy but submission. Perugia tells me it is of no use to talk about Pisa till this matter is settled; and he urges that to silence Fra G. for a time, and to forbid him ever again to speak contemptuously of the Pope, is a very little thing for his Holiness to ask of the Signory. And every one else is of the same opinion, *i.e.* that you must absolutely obey.

We have given the last two letters in immediate succession because the latter of them is a reply to the former, but intermediate between the two is a letter from Savonarola to Alexander VI., which shows that he at least had no sympathy with the efforts that were being made by his friends, and by others from political motives, on his behalf.

13*th March;* Savonarola to the Pope.[2]—I had always supposed that it was the office of a good Christian to defend the faith, and to work for the reform of morals; but in carrying out this work I have met with nothing but trials and tribulations; I have not found one to help me. I had hoped in your Holiness; but instead of this you have turned against me, and have put it into the power of savage wolves to wreak their cruelty on me. Nor has any hearing been given to the reasons which I have alleged, not to excuse a sin, but to prove the truth of my doctrine, my innocence, and my submission to the Church. Wherefore I cannot hope any longer in your Holiness, but I must have recourse to Him alone who chooses the weak things of this world to confound the strong. . . . He will help me to prove and maintain, in the face of the world, the holiness of this undertaking for which I suffer so much, and will inflict condign punishment on those who persecute me, and seek to hinder my work. As for me, I do not seek the glory of this world, but I look for and desire death. Your Holiness will do well not to procrastinate longer, but to make provision for your own salvation.

On 14th March was held the most important debate, beyond comparison, of all that had hitherto been held in connection with the affairs of Fra Girolamo. Its occasion was the receipt of the Brief of 9th March, and it is of so much interest, as giving an insight into the state of public opinion at this critical juncture, as to deserve separate treatment.

[1] "Dovete credere che non si supporterebbe in alcuno modo si disputassi della loro auctorità, le quale consiste per la maggior parte nelle censure."

[2] Villari, ii. 129.

CHAPTER XVII

A FULL-DRESS DEBATE

THE Pratica, or debate, which was held in the Collegio on 14th March 1498, was regarded on all hands as of quite exceptional importance. The number of speakers was unusually large, and in fact every phase of opinion appears to have had full expression. The minutes of the discussion have been published by Lupi, and they give so thorough an insight into the state of feeling among different sections of the Council of Eighty, and of the office-holders of the day, that no apology seems to be needed for giving in this place a somewhat full summary of the official report. The grammar of the reporter is occasionally at fault, and sentences are not unfrequently left without the conclusion which the sense requires. While, therefore, in all important passages we adhere as faithfully as possible to the very words of the speaker as reported, in other cases we have been obliged to paraphrase somewhat freely.

It will be understood that each speaker delivers not merely his own personal opinion, but that of the majority of his panchata, or bench. Naturally, however, a spokesman would in each case be chosen whose individual views agreed with those of the majority. Occasionally the minority also put up a representative, and sometimes the speaker adds a few words on his own account. It will be seen that the various boards of officials are heard in the first instance, and after them the several benches of the Ottanta.

Of the Gonfalonieri, nine, whose spokesman is not named, are of opinion that the Pope has acted in a fatherly manner ("si governi verso di noi come buon padre"), and that as he has so clearly expressed his wish, the sermons should at once be put a stop to, lest out of a small affair a greater should arise. For assuredly an interdict is a great matter, and much to be feared, since it exposes men to be plundered and treated as outlaws.

Seven of the Gonfalonieri, however, declare their conviction,

through Luigi Corsi, that in view of the immense services rendered by Fra Girolamo to the city, he ought by no means to be treated harshly.

Let the Brief, and the will of his Holiness be communicated to him, and let him be exhorted to act according to his conscience, and probably he will, of his own accord, desist from preaching. If he does not, it is not to be supposed that any one would wish to hinder the Word of God. Some of those who have done so in times past have come to a bad end. We must defend the liberties and the honour of our city, which we shall not be doing if we take action against a servant of God like Fra H. As for the Pope, it is to be thought that he will change his mind if we write to him setting forth the holiness of the Friar's life and teaching.

Niccolò Valori (for the Twelve).[1]—It seems to us that the Pope is exceeding his powers, especially as he has pronounced that the Friar's doctrine is good. We ought not to be in like manner prejudiced against him, considering his labours for the salvation of souls.

Giovanni Canacci (pro XII. designatis).[2]—With reference to this Brief we bear in mind that he who sends it is God's Vicar, who holds universal jurisdiction ; that we to whom it is sent are the weakest of the five powers of Italy ; that we live by our merchandise, and that our merchants are everywhere to be found. We are, therefore, decidedly of opinion that the preaching should at once be stopped, and all intercourse of the citizens with Fra G. be forbidden. And, in fact, it is better both for us and for him that political matters should be discussed in the Palazzo rather than in his convent. As for himself, the speaker is strongly of opinion that the Friar ought to be confined to his cell. It is no disgrace to the city to give to the Pope what belongs to the Pope. The evil consequences of the detention, or usurpation, of what belongs to another are shown by the example of Helen of Troy (!), etc., etc.

Antonio della Vigna (pro capitaneis partis Guelfe).—On the one hand, no one would wish to speak of Fra G. otherwise than with reverence, or to say anything but what is good of him. But, on the other hand, after weighing all considerations, and considering that our ambassador has done his utmost for the Friar, and now counsels obedience, it seems best on the whole to obey the Pope.

Paolantonio Soderini (for the Ten).—My Lords are much displeased with the Brief, which does not show sufficient regard for the dignity and welfare of the city. Such a Brief would not have been sent to Perugia.

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[1] The twelve "Buoni Uomini," who acted as assessors of the Signory, and seem to have had no other official duties (Villari, i. 261).

[2] The new board of Twelve, who had, as it appears, already been elected, but had not yet entered on their office. We learn from one of Somenzi's letters (16th March, *infra*) that they were all hostile to Savonarola. Canacci was one of the commission subsequently appointed to examine Savonarola and his companions.

And if the Pope has not considered our honour, at least let the Signory defend the honour of God. The whole affair proceeds from the astuteness of our enemies, and tends to the disturbance of the city. If God has miraculously supported us till now [it is to be thought that He will continue to do so].[1] The best plan will be to write, not to the Pope, but to our ambassador, to the effect that we are ready to yield in all lawful matters, but that when it is a question of demands suggested by rival powers (*i.e.* Venice and Milan) we shall hold ourselves excused before God and man. This is the stone of offence which has been cast in our midst to bring the city to ruin, and the Signory should be mindful of their duty. The letter of our ambassador would give just cause for indignation, were it not that he had previously reported the loving dispositions of the Pope towards us.

Ser Baldo (for the Eight).—All my colleagues adhere to the teaching of Fra H., and the Pope's words confirm their conviction. All, therefore, except one, judge that we ought to suffer him to continue to preach, especially as Lent is now nearly half over. We think you ought to act as you have been advised (by Soderini). One of us, however, is of opinion that the preaching should be interrupted for a while, in order to avoid arousing the Pope's anger.

Lorenzo de' Lenzi ("pro officialibus Montis").—My colleagues are indignant at the Brief and at the ambassador's letter; for while on the one hand the critical state of our affairs makes it important that we should secure the Pope's goodwill, on the other hand, it is intolerable to hear it proposed that this venerable religious should be arrested at his command, and should be separated from so noble a house of religion. The speaker enlarges on the excellence (tucta perfectione) of Savonarola's doctrine, the moral reform which he has effected, and the deep debt of gratitude which the city owes him. He declares, on his own part and that of his colleagues, that it is the Friar's sermons which have saved the republic from ruin. To him they owe the preservation of peace, and the institution of the Consiglio Grande, which has been a bulwark alike against the tyranny of an oligarchy and against revolutionary measures (di non far grandi e di non far novità). Moreover, we ought to esteem God more than all others, for He is Lord of heaven and earth. My brethren are unanimously of opinion that on no account ought we to put ourselves in opposition to Christ, for God alone has supported us hitherto. We advise that the Brief be communicated to the Friar, and he be allowed to take his own course. If the interdict should come, let it be borne in mind that God has delivered us from worse evils, as when the Emperor came to take part in the Pisan war. God has ever saved us, and He will not now abandon us.

Francesco degli Alessandri (pro Conservatoribus) would prefer to leave the matter to the discretion of the Signory.

Guidantonio Vespucci (pro doctoribus, *i.e.* the lawyers).—He speaks on

[1] The reporter has evidently fused two sentences here, the first of which requires to be completed as above.

behalf of five ; the minority will speak for themselves. They are highly displeased with the Brief ; for they would have wished that every one should have enjoyed all spiritual consolations during this Lent. Yet, considering the critical state of affairs, and that private interest must yield to public, and computing probable losses and gains, they conclude that, on the whole, obedience is the wiser course. To ask the Pope, as they are doing, to grant them favours in the matter of Pisa, and of a tithe to be levied on the clergy, and at the same time to resist his solemn commands, is to pursue a self-contradictory policy. On the other hand, no one need have a scruple about inhibiting the sermons, as if thereby we were resisting God, for this would be done by legitimate authority. Nor is it to the purpose to compare Savonarola with S. Bernardino, for he was not forbidden by the Pope to preach. It has been alleged that the threat of an interdict is a light matter. I cannot take this view of the case, for ecclesiastical censures are the only arms which the Pope can wield. If it be said that the whole affair has had its origin here rather than in Rome, I am certainly of opinion that this should be looked into, and if this be found to be true, that the delinquent ought to be punished. It has been said that we ought to be solicitous for the honour of God, and for my part I think that this ought to be put before every other consideration ; but this is an ambiguous fashion of speech, for the Pope is Vicar of Christ on earth, and has his power from God; and it is to be believed that whoever obeys the Pope and his censures, whether just or unjust—about which I express no judgment—will gain more merit than by disobeying. The evil consequences which will follow on disobedience are considerable. On the whole, however, it may be best to communicate the Brief to the Friar, to see what he will do. If he submits, it may be possible to appease the Pope. If he will not submit, then it will be time to consider what is next to be done, and how it can be done without scandal. Of course, if it were certain that the Friar holds a direct divine commission, we ought to let him go on preaching. But as this is not certain, obedience is clearly the wiser course.

Antonio Malegonelle (for the minority of four).—We are agreed that no subject of greater importance has ever come up for debate. The advantages of obedience are manifest. But we are convinced that this trouble has been stirred up by the Italian powers in order to work mischief to the city, and that our enemies have prejudiced the Pope against Fra H. As for the sermons, it is not to be supposed that any one will lose heaven either for hearing them or for not hearing them, for, after all, another preacher may be found. But what forces me to a conclusion favourable to him is, that he declares it to be God's will that we should by all means believe him.[1] We must therefore suppose either that he is a wicked deceiver, or else that he is a good and holy man, and on the latter supposition he ought not to be hindered from preaching

[1] "Io sono constrecto quando lui dice che gl'è volontà di Dio a credergli a ogni modo."

by any censure, and to prohibit him would be to incur a grievous curse.

Enea di Stufa (pro sua panchata).[1]—We have to consider, in the first place, the honour of God, then the interests of the city and public utility. The city, standing alone as she does against many enemies, has been guided so far by the grace of God. Now, considering the doctrine of Fra H., and the great fruits which it has produced, considering, too, that his monastery is distinguished by the holy life of its members, so as to be worthy of comparison with the "cenobii" of ancient times, and, moreover, that the Friar speaks by divine inspiration, we do not see how he can lawfully be prohibited from preaching. In commanding what he does command, the Pope seems to be exceeding his powers. For his power extends to spiritual but not to temporal matters. Now, this whole affair appears to be a temporal matter, a political move of our enemies. If you obey, the city will fall into great disorder, and the Pope will take occasion to demand something still more unreasonable. Nor will our merchants suffer from an interdict which will be manifestly unjust.

Ridolfo de' Ridolfi.—My colleagues think we should obey in part, but not entirely. They do not think that the Friar ought to be put in confinement, but they think that he would do well to have patience, and abstain for a while from preaching. If disorders should thence arise, they may be dealt with as occasion shall serve.

Piero Gualterotti.—We do not advise that the Friar be sent to Rome, but that he be prohibited from preaching. The powers are disposed to restore our possessions. It is not well to spoil our prospects by taking on ourselves another's trouble.

Piero Carnesecchi agrees with the last speaker, but would like to see the matter referred to the Consiglio Grande.

Giovanni Cambi.—Either the Friar is a man of God or he is a wicked man. In the former case we should expose ourselves to the anger of God by interfering with him. The Pope is to be highly esteemed, but in just and lawful matters. If this interdict should come, it will not be the first of which we have had experience. As for the Pope's promises to restore Pisa, it is not in his power to do so.

Giuliano Gondi.—We recommend you to obey the Brief, for in your oath on taking office you promised to be loyal to Holy Church. Do not then perjure yourselves. This man preaches that the Pope is no Pope, and that we should not believe in him, and other things he says which a man would not say to his cook. *This man will set on foot a sect of fraticelli such as has been seen here before*, and it is an heretical sect which you are helping to form. The danger of the interdict is very real and very great, for it exposes our merchandise to plunder. Messer Enea (Stufa), if

[1] Stufa and the speakers who follow him are members of the Ottanta, not holding any special office. Each speaks for his bench, or for a portion (whether the majority or the minority) thereof.

he had anything to lose, would speak very differently. As for me, I have merchandise (wine) all over Italy, and if the sentence should be passed, I shall be bankrupt (non posso fare il dovere a persona). The speaker concludes by expressing his belief that when Fra H. sees this sentence he will submit, and will apply for permission to leave the city.

Francesco Valori.—To prohibit the citizens of a free city from going to S. Marco is intolerable. It is error which ought to be punished, but men should be free to do what is good. If any one has gone there to treat of political matters let him be chastised. But as for the Brief, God hates ingratitude, of which we should be guilty were we to oppose a man who never spared himself in our service. This monastery is now more truly a school of virtue than it has been at any time during the last fifty years ; and as for the Friar, I advise you to show him more honour and esteem than you have shown to any one for two centuries past. Instead of interfering with his preaching, we ought rather to give him fuller opportunities for declaring the Word of God. The Briefs are surreptitious documents (mendicati), due to the machinations of our enemies, who are not only guilty of heresy (vogliano heresicare), but are doing their best to bring us to destruction.

Giuliano Mazzinghi will not discuss the question whether the Friar be a bad man or a good. Let the matter be discussed in the Consiglio Grande, which has supreme power.[1] No one would wish to do anything contrary to the honour of the city. But this will be best consulted by obedience to the Pope.

Antonio Canigiani.—We agree that no more important question has ever been discussed. Our first duty is to God, and in this duty we should be wanting were we to interfere with the good work of so holy a man, whose life and doctrine the Pope himself has commended. The Pope would not have sent such a Brief to Perugia. He is, indeed, true Pope ; but Popes are men, and can err. Let us fear the wrath of God rather than that of the Pope. There are plenty of instances of men who have even suffered martyrdom rather than offend God. Whether the Friar's excommunication be valid or not, our liberties are not to be surrendered to a Pope.

Giacopo Schiattesi.—Fra G. is an excellent man (valente huomo) of commendable life and devotion, but his sermons have sowed discord in the city, and have caused dissensions in families, and have brought us to this present pass. Let him cease to preach for a while, and let all the citizens unite for the good of the republic.

Guido Cambi.—Let us not hinder the Word of God, declared to us by a holy man who has been sent by God Himself.

Giovanni Brunetti.—Either refer the matter to the Consiglio Grande, or submit. This way lies the true honour and security of the city. Fra G. is a learned man, but any man may be mistaken, and what we

[1] Several subsequent speakers are in favour of the *referendum*. It will not be necessary to mention the matter in each case.

know, by comparison with what we don't know, is very little. Have not very learned men, for instance Origen, been deceived before now? *Even a good man may err, and mistake his own imaginings for the spirit of prophecy.*

Tommasio (*sic*) Fortini.—The enemy of the human race always hinders the Word of God, more especially in the acceptable time. As for the Brief, if the Vicar of God opposes the Word of God he is not to be obeyed. The subject can have no authority over his superior. But it will be well to send some one to show the Brief to Fra G., and he will know how to act.

Luigi Venturi.—No one can deny the admirable excellence of the work done by the Friar, and we ought to protect and honour such a man; but, on the other hand, considering that the Pope represents Christ, it is a terrible thing to disobey any precept of his. But perhaps if we obey him in regard of a part of his commands he will be appeased (and not insist on the rest).

Vieri de' Medici.—Disobedience to the Pope has always had evil consequences. But it is to be thought that if Fra H. understands that his preaching is hurtful to the city, he will desist of his own accord.

Piero Canti.—Some of us fear to oppose the good work of the Friar. Others fear to disobey the Pope. But, on the whole, considering the thorough knowledge of the whole case which our ambassador enjoys, and his former close intimacy with Fra H., we think his advice should be followed, and that the preaching should be stopped. And we think that the Friar—when he understands the circumstances—ought to stop of his own accord. But the matter should be referred to the Consiglio Grande.

G. B. Bartolini.—We ought not to suffer a hair of the head of this holy man to be touched, but to defend and favour him. There is no need to discuss the character of the Pope's commands, for all the trouble proceeds from the malice of our enemies, whom may God pardon. If this holy father is the victim of persecution, it is because some one's evil passions have been aroused.

Bernardo Nasi speaks in even higher terms than those who had preceded him of the good work done by Savonarola, and insists even more strongly than they had done that the whole trouble is due to the machinations of the political enemies of Florence. To refer the matter to the Consiglio Grande would only breed worse confusion. If the Signory will but keep their eyes open they will see the truth. There are evil-disposed citizens in their midst, as he has good reason to know from the odious calumnies which have been uttered against himself.

Giacomo Pandolfini agrees entirely with Messer Guido (Vespucci).—The Brief should be obeyed to the extent of putting an end to the preaching.

Sacchetti, considering that all the good estate of the city since 1494 is

due to God, and to the work and prayers of the Friar, sees no remedy but in prayer, that the anger of God be not provoked by the persecution of this servant of God.

Ormanozzo Deti thinks that all can be summed up thus: Some say Fra H. has his prophecy from God, and we must not oppose God; for it is better to obey God than to obey the Pope. But those who say this cannot deny that possibly it is otherwise, *i.e.* that the Friar is not, after all, commissioned by God. Others allege that it is certain that we ought to obey the Pope. Now, in a matter of such difficulty, *it is better to hold to what is certain than to what is uncertain.* If it be said that this Brief is the work of men, who want to use it for their own advancement, let these men be sought out and punished. Meanwhile, let us try to persuade the Friar to desist from preaching; and if he will not, then make known to him the will of the city that he should cease.[1]

Three things are clear from the foregoing summary. In the first place, it is obvious that however hostile towards Savonarola the leading members of the Signory may have been, they had not a free hand, but were practically obliged, as well as constitutionally bound, to respect the wishes of the majority of those who in a greater or less degree shared with them the administrative power. Secondly, it is plain that many of the friends of Fra Girolamo felt very uneasy about the effect of his sermons, and would have been glad if of his own accord he had ceased for a while from preaching. And, thirdly, his most pronounced adversaries—at any rate among those now in the Collegio—were by no means minded to hand him over to the Pope. The tension of feeling, and perhaps, too, the uncertainty of the issue, may probably account for the circumstance that after so long a debate no division was taken. The plan adopted was to refer the matter to a special committee, which certainly was fairly representative of the two principal parties in the city, the Arrabbiati and the Frateschi.[2] Neither the Palleschi nor the Compagnacci, however, seem to have been represented on the Board. The latter, indeed, deserved rather the name of a gang than of a party, and the former were not strong enough openly to declare themselves. The chief names on the committee are those of Vespucci, Soderini, Valori, Guicciardini, Albizi, and Lorenzo "di Pier Francesco" as he is commonly called. The last named was a distinguished member of the Medici family, who had, however, no

[1] Lupi, pp. 33-53.

[2] We own to a certain distaste for the use of these terms, which, after all, were only nicknames, and do not fairly represent the mental and political attitude of the more moderate men on either side.

love for Piero, the head of his house, and had thrown in his lot with the aristocratic party.

The resolution arrived at by this committee, on 17th March, was to the effect that Fra Girolamo be "persuaded" to cease entirely from preaching.[1] It was on the following day, 18th March, being the third Sunday in Lent, that Savonarola delivered his farewell sermon to the people of Florence. That this discourse did not differ, except perhaps in vehemence and strength of invective, from those which had gone before it, has been already seen.

[1] Lupi, p. 54.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE LULL BEFORE THE LAST STORM

THE diplomatic correspondence of the latter half of the month of March now claims our attention, and will bring us to the threshold of the closing scenes of the drama. The reader will be at no loss to perceive how very inadequately the Florentine Ten apprehended the gravity of the situation as it was regarded at Rome, and how guilelessly they trusted the treacherous assurances of Lodovico Sforza, and of his worthy tool Somenzi. Of the Signory, some, as has been seen, were favourably disposed to Savonarola. Others, though opposed to him, were probably content that he should be silent. But it seems only too clear that the Gonfaloniere, Piero Popoleschi, and some of his colleagues, confidently awaited the veering of the breeze of popular favour, and rejoiced at the troubles which they affected to deplore, in the sure hope that the indiscretion of the Friar's friends would ultimately strengthen the hands of his most bitter enemies.

16th March; Somenzi to Sforza.[1]—The Signory has held a consultation relative to the Brief. Two-thirds of those who spoke were in favour of submission, yet no conclusion was come to. I am informed, however, that within a couple of days a resolution will be passed, to the effect that the Friar must cease from preaching. *This will be a first step:* and thereafter, if the Pope chooses to proceed further, it is believed that he will gain all that he wishes for. The election of the twelve Buoni Uomini has taken place, and is of great importance, for they have a voice in all deliberations of the Collegio. The newly-elected men are all hostile to the Friar; and the same result will be seen in all the elections which are to follow, for a majority of the Consiglio Grande are of the same mind. You have already understood from me that the Ten are all supporters of the Friar, and the terms of my commission require that all my official dealings should be with them, unless your Highness should entrust me with some special message to the Signory. But having been

[1] Villari, ii. Append. p. lvi.

informed that my communications were not always faithfully reported by the Ten to the Signory, I sought and obtained a secret interview with the Gonfaloniere, to whom I read your Highness's letter. He thanked me warmly, and said it was quite true that the Ten had not faithfully reported to him and to his colleagues the contents of the letter. He was glad that I had read it to him, for it was, he said, very much to the purpose, in view of the discussions now in progress concerning the Papal Brief.

17*th March;* Same to same.—He has informed the Ten, as requested, of the displeasure of the Pope, and has exhorted them, in the Duke's name, to take efficacious means to content his Holiness, lest he be driven to take stronger measures. They replied that they had already heard of this, and had already written to your Highness begging you to use your good offices with the Pope. They declare that it would be impossible to speak too highly of the life and work of the Friar; wherefore they are persuaded that if his Holiness were rightly informed of these things he would not proceed against him as he does. They begged me to implore your Highness to do your best to appease the anger of the Pope, that he may proceed no further against this servant of God. And in requital of your efforts on behalf of Fra H. (!) they bid me promise you their hearty prayers for your welfare. "Questa è stata la resposta che sopra ciò mi hanno facto questi Signori Dieci."

18*th March;* The Signory to Bonsi.[1]—They regret extremely that the preaching of Fra H. should have so greatly displeased the Pope. For his Holiness's satisfaction they now communicate to Bonsi the resolution at which they have finally arrived, viz. to put a stop to the sermons; and they excuse their delay in replying by explaining that the discussion of such matters in a constitutional way necessarily takes time. The Friar, however, having been now forbidden to preach, they trust that his Holiness will accept their excuses, and will show himself favourably disposed, etc.

Same date; The Ten to Bonsi.[2]—The main facts he will have understood from the Signory. But they wish to add that the real cause of the delay in replying to the Brief has been due, not so much to the requirements of orderly procedure, as to the conviction of many citizens that the Pope, whose last Brief bears witness to his esteem for the doctrine of the Friar, and to his sense of the good results which his sermons have produced, would not have been persuaded to proceed against him except by the misrepresentations of the enemies of the city. However, notwithstanding this conviction, it has been judged best to place the duty of obedience to the Holy See before all private considerations. Therefore the Signory have determined to put a stop to the sermons. But although this con-

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[1] Marchese, n. 21. This is a reply to Bonsi's letter of the 9th. How anxiously it was awaited, Bonsi's letters of the same date, and of the 19th and 20th (summarised below), abundantly show.

[2] Gherardi, p. 202.

clusion has been unanimously arrived at, a large number of the citizens are deeply grieved at being deprived of the spiritual consolations which they were wont to experience in hearing him ; and they confidently hope that the Pope will, of his goodness, very shortly restore, to them this their spiritual food. The letter is to be communicated to the Pope and to others, or not, at Bonsi's discretion.

Same date ; Bonsi to the Ten.[1]—He understands that the Pope has communicated to several Cardinals his extreme indignation at the terrible invectives uttered by Fra G. against his Holiness and the whole court, and his anger was directed also against the city which permits these things. The Pope has been advised no longer to be content with a mere inhibition from preaching, but to demand that the Friar be sent to Rome without delay ; and, moreover, not merely to declare the interdict, but to lay hands on all Florentines now in Rome, and to impound their goods, and if the Friar be not sent to Rome within a fixed limit of time, to imprison some of the Florentines in the castle of S. Angelo, and to confiscate their property. To all this the Pope has agreed, and has declared that he is minded to inflict as much harm as possible upon the city, in requital of the grievous insults offered to himself and the Holy See (per vendicare tanta ingiuria, etc.). The Ten are implored "for the love of God" to take measures without delay to obviate issues so mischievous, and by no means to imagine that their envoy has it in his power to take any effective steps in so grave a crisis.

Same date ; Somenzi to Sforza.[2]—Late yesterday evening the Signory communicated their decision to the Friar. And this morning he declared that he would preach no more ; but he has not on this account withdrawn a jot of what he had previously said ; in fact, they say that in his sermon this morning he inveighed against his Holiness more strongly than ever. It is thought here that the Pope cannot, consistently with his honour, rest satisfied with this. But the ambassador of the Signory in Rome, who is entirely (?) devoted to the Friar, has written that he feels sure that his Holiness will be content, and will proceed no further, if only the Friar desist from preaching.

19th March ; Bonsi to the Ten.[3]—Conversations with Perugia and Capaccio entirely confirm his statements of yesterday. He is distressed at having received no reply to his letter of the 9th inst., which accompanied the Brief. The Florentine merchants in Rome have begged him to obtain a wise decision from the Signory. He understands that Piero (de' Medici) has been with the Pope, and is in higher favour than heretofore. All the enemies of Florence are in high spirits (ogni vostro adversario . . . piglia hora animo assai).

Same date ; The Florentine merchants in Rome to the Signory.[4]—

[1] Gherardi, p. 204. The writer had, of course, not yet received the letters last given.

[2] Villari, p. lviii.

[3] Gherardi, p. 204.

[4] Gherardi, p. 205.

They represent the imminent danger in which they find themselves, in consequence of the favour shown by the Signory to "the Venerable Fra Hieronimo," and the disgrace and the mischief which will accrue to the city if they are made to suffer. Therefore let the Signory, by a wise course of action, come to their relief.

20th March; Bonsi to the Ten.[1]—Is greatly distressed at having received no reply (to his letter of 9th March !). He hourly awaits despatches with the utmost anxiety.

Same date; Tranchedino to Sforza.[2]—Messer Zoanne (Giovanni Bentivoglio) has secret information from Florence that the minds of some of the chief men are in a ferment, and a tumult is to be expected, which may issue in a revolution ; either because the French show how little they care for their Florentine friends, or because the people are in despair, and see that everything is going from bad to worse, for they begin to be aware of the hypocrisy and vain-gloriousness of the Friar. The Frateschi are believed to be in communication with France, promising a subsidy if the King will come to their assistance.

This, it need hardly be said, is mere political gossip of a malicious and mischievous kind. As regards the prospects of a revolutionary tumult, it is only too obvious that the wish was father to the thought. Whether "la parte Fratesca" was in communication with France it is impossible to say. Of Fra Girolamo's own message to the king we shall have to speak presently.

23rd March; Bonsi to the Signory.[3]—He has communicated to the Pope the reply of the Signory. The Pope takes it ill that they have not written directly to him, and will give no definite answer until he has a letter addressed to himself. He is pleased that Fra G. has ceased to preach, but he hears that other friars of S. Marco have in their sermons shown much contempt for the Holy See, and is surprised that such things should be tolerated. If you wish to obtain any favour from him, he insists, not indeed that you should prohibit these others from preaching, but that they should cease from such language. If the Friar will obey by being silent for a time, and will afterwards seek absolution, he will willingly grant it, and will give him permission to preach, for he does not condemn his doctrine, but his contempt of ecclesiastical censures, etc., for if these things were tolerated, the authority of the Holy See would be destroyed. Bonsi replied that he knew nothing of these other preachers, and that false reports are often sent to Rome. He now exhorts the Signory to show their loyalty towards the Pope by satisfying him in all lawful matters.

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[1] Gherardi, p. 207.
[2] Del Lungo, n. 31 ; Villari, p. lix.
[3] Gherardi, p. 209.

24*th March;* Bonsi to the Ten.[1]—A letter to the same effect as that to the Signory, but urging more explicitly that efficacious measures be taken to put a stop to intemperate language in the pulpit, and that the Signory should by all means write to the Pope in person.

Same date; The Ten to Bonsi.[2]—They are greatly troubled to hear of the Pope's displeasure in the matter of Fra H., but they trust that he will be appeased when he hears that they have carried out, in substance, what he required. And they trust that his Holiness will shortly restore to the citizens the spiritual consolation which they derive from hearing the Friar. This letter is to be shown to the Pope, but the writers add, in a covering letter of the same date, that they know very well that mischief is being done by persons in Florence, who, to further their own evil ends, persist in sending false and misleading reports to Rome.

25*th March;* The Duke of Milan (Sforza) to Cardinal Sforza.[3]—He is sorry (?) to hear that the Pope is displeased with the reply of the Florentines to his first Brief.[4] We have written to Florence in very strong terms, and have used our best efforts with the Florentine ambassador here.[5] He (Pepi) has replied that, according to information received, the Friar will not preach again, and will respect the wishes and the honour of his Holiness. Therefore, you have acted most wisely in not intervening to appease the Pope, and in causing him to write the second Brief; for we see clearly that to it is due the changed attitude of the Florentines, and their submission to his commands.

Same date; Taverna to Sforza.[6]—To the information, communicated by the Florentine envoy, that Fra H. has ceased to preach, the Pope replied with very kind expressions (parole molto amorevoli et grate), assuring him of his good-will towards the city.

26*th March;* d'Este to Felino Sandeo (Papal Secretary).[7]—Messer Zanluca has communicated to us your opinion concerning the defence of Fra H., composed by the son of M. Galeotto della Mirandola, and dedicated to ourselves. We thank you, and by your advice we write the accompanying letter to the Pope, assuring him that we never requested the Count Zanfrancesco (Giov. Fr. Pico della M.) to instruct us concerning the efficacy of the excommunication of the Friar. For we never doubted the power of his Holiness, and if we had been in doubt, we have counsellors and learned men from whom we should have sought advice. We shall give the culpable party to understand that he must not use

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[1] Gherardi, p. 209.

[2] Gherardi, p. 207.

[3] Del Lungo, n. 33.

[4] "Ci e rincresciuto grandemente" . . . etc. But from what follows it appears only too plainly that the Duke was rejoiced to hear of the difficulties in which the Signory found themselves.

[5] *I.e.* to bring the Signory to a better mind.

[6] Del Lungo, n. 34.

[7] Cappelli, n. 145.

our name in connection with such matters, and that he must revoke the dedication, though, as the tract has been printed, and is in circulation, it will be difficult for him to satisfy our wish. Pray present our letter to the Pope.

Same date; d'Este to the Pope.[1]—The writer is greatly indignant that Mirandola should have presumed to dedicate to himself the tract in defence of Savonarola, and to give to the tract the form of an answer to questions alleged to have been addressed to him by d'Este. He calls God to witness that he never consulted Pico on the subject, and never doubted the authority and power of the Pope. He assures his Holiness that in this matter Pico has either lied or indulged in a literary fiction (in hoc aut finxisse aut mentitum esse), and that he himself is a loyal son of the Church, and has always spoken honourably of the Pope. He has written to those whom it concerns, severely reproving them for having undertaken a task beyond their powers, and one which is unworthy of a faithful Christian (rem humeris suis imparem et a cujuslibet fidelis officio alienam).

27th March; Somenzi to Sforza.[2]—The Signory have forbidden Fra H. to preach, and he has ceased to do so. But he has made three of his brethren preach in three different churches, who speak not less freely than he had done, but perhaps more so, against the Pope and the clergy. Whence it appears that the wishes of his Holiness have not been effectively carried out. Moreover, on Sunday last, which was the Feast of the Annunciation of the B. V. M., he celebrated High Mass, and communicated a great number of persons, who, as is publicly known, are all excommunicate. It is clear, then, that there is no other remedy for this disease than for his Holiness to proceed further in the way of censures and an interdict, to be declared without fail, unless, within a stated time, the Friar is expelled from the city and its territories. The friends of the Friar are doing their utmost to breed divisions in the Signory, but without success. Certain magistrates have been elected within the last few days, all of whom are hostile to the Friar; so that if only the Pope will persevere in his purpose, the Frateschi will soon be under the power of our friends, and will no longer be able to intrigue with the French as they have hitherto done.

28th March; The Ten to Pepi.[3]—You have already understood that, in accordance with the wishes of his Holiness, the Venerable Fra H. has ceased to preach. Wherefore it is to be hoped that any obstacle which may heretofore have stood in the way of the restoration of Pisa may now be deemed to have been removed. Be good enough to beg his Lordship (Bentivoglio) to use his good offices on our behalf with the Pope, and to implore his Holiness not to give ear to the malicious reports of our enemies.

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[1] Cappelli, n. 146.
[2] Villari, ii. Append. p. lx.
[3] Gherardi, p. 211.

Same date; Tranchedino to Sforza.[1]—He hears that "Lorenzino" (Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici) has made up his mind to leave Florence. The writer does not know what to make of it, but believes that the Friar is hostile to him as he is to every one who seems likely to acquire influence, and to use it against himself. He fears that the Friar is still capable of creating a disturbance, as he has put up other preachers in his place to rail against the Holy See, and he seems to be supported by those who are in authority. It seems that the Friar has little regard for the threats of the Signory, and still less for those of Rome (che pocho estimi le minaccie del Palazzo et mancho quelle di Roma), which (adds this pious ambassador) is a very scandalous thing.

Same date; Taverna to Sforza (a fragment).[2]—It has been judged desirable to crush Fra Hieronymo if possible (ad reprimere et annichilare, possendosi, Fra H. da Ferrara); and to this end certain Florentines (resident in Rome) have assured his Holiness that the present Signory will not fail in their duty to him. Efforts are being made to induce the Pope to send a prelate to Florence, with full powers to chastise and imprison the Friar, and to deliver him into the hands of his Holiness. The Pope, however, has not finally decided what he will do.

29th March; Somenzi to Sforza.[3]—Though Fra H. no longer preaches, he has put up three other friars who speak in more unmeasured terms than himself (dichono assai pegio che lui). The worst of these is his companion, Fra Domenico da Pescia, a man who is regarded rather as a presumptuous and loutish preacher than as prudent and fit for his work (el quale non è tenuto tanto prudente et sufficiente predicatore quanto *presumptuoso et bestiale*). And whereas these three friars continually maintain that obedience is not due to the Holy See, especially in the matter of the excommunication, the nullity of which they openly proclaim, a certain Fra Francesco, of the Friars Minor, has replied to them in his sermons. Both parties have drawn up and published their conclusions; and as the matter appears to be one which touches the peace and welfare of the city, the Signory have summoned both Fra Domenico and Fra Francesco, and they are now in the Palazzo, where a secret conference is being held.

Same date; Tranchedino to Sforza.[4]—My Lord (Bentivoglio) is delighted with the news from Florence. It seems a matter of no small moment that by reason of this Friar the city is in danger of being thrown into worse confusion than ever; and it is to be hoped that the present Signory will show themselves more capable of bringing matters to a

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[1] Del Lungo, n. 35.

[2] Villari, p. lxi. The writer is that Bishop of Parma, who on 17th February assured Bonsi that he was doing his best to defend the interests of Florence in the Roman court. It will be remembered, however, that even Bonsi's ardour on behalf of Savonarola had by this time very sensibly cooled.

[3] Del Lungo, n. 36.

[4] Del Lungo, n. 37; Villari, p. lxi.

satisfactory result than their predecessors. The writer is confident that the crisis will not last long, if only those whom it concerns will act with good sense.[1]

31*st March;* The Signory to the Pope.[2]—We have already informed your Holiness, through our ambassador, of our action in putting a stop to the preaching of Fra H. We should have written direct to your Holiness were it not that the constitution prescribes that no letter shall be sent to the Pope except by virtue of a decree of the Collegio, which cannot be assembled every moment (legibus civitatis nostræ . . . prohibemur ad S.P. dare licteras sine decreto collegarum nostrarum, qui singulis horarum momentis (!) congregari non possunt). However, as you have expressed a wish to receive a letter from us, we should fear to seem remiss in our duty were we not to inform you, as we do by these presents, that we have forbidden Savonarola to preach. And we are glad to bear witness that he has abstained from so doing for some days past. We are pleased to hear that our submission has appeased your Holiness, from whom we hope for a continuance of the good-will which you have shown to us in the past.

Same date; The Signory to Bonsi.[3]—We enclose a letter which you will present to the Pope. As for what you say about other friars having spoken disrespectfully of the Holy See, we have made enquiries, but can learn nothing to this effect (informatoci, non ritragghiamo cotesto da nessuno). Use your best endeavours in our behalf, and keep us well informed. The letter to the Pope contains nothing which you do not know already.

In the meanwhile, Savonarola, who neither hoped nor wished for reconciliation with the Pope, had taken a step which, if it were not successful after a fashion that would have changed the whole course of subsequent ecclesiastical history, could hardly fail to be fatal to himself personally. It was now that he finally determined on despatching his circular letter, as it may be called, to the sovereigns of Europe, *i.e.* to the Emperor and to the Kings of France, Spain, England, and Hungary. The letters have all substantially the same tenor. "The moment of vengeance is come, and the Lord desires me to reveal new secrets. . . . The Church is full of abominations from head to foot, and you not only apply no remedy, but even worship that which is the cause of the evil wherewith she is contaminated. Wherefore the Lord is greatly incensed, and for some

[1] Another letter from Tranchedino to Sforza (31st March, *ibid.*, n. 38) is here omitted as of no importance. On 30th March, d'Este writes to Manfredi (Cappelli, n. 147), asking to be kept informed of all that passes in connection with Savonarola.

[2] Marchese, n. 23.

[3] Marchese, n. 22.

time past has left His Church without a shepherd. . . . I now declare to you that this Alexander is no true Pope (non è Papa), because, to say nothing of his most wicked crime of simony, . . . I affirm that he is not a Christian, and that he does not believe in the existence of God, which is to exceed the utmost limits of unfaith." The writer goes on to exhort the princes to set their hands to the work of assembling a Council in a suitable and free place. God would show the truth of what he said, even by miraculous signs. A few sentences were added in each case, suitable to the dispositions of the several sovereigns. He appealed to the vanity of the Emperor; to Ferdinand and Isabella he wrote that this work was more important than that of conquering the infidel. Charles VIII. is reminded of his election by God to bear the sword of his vengeance.[1] The letters to Henry VII. of England and to the King of Hungary have not been preserved.

These documents were indeed never despatched. To prepare the way for them, Savonarola enlisted the services of five trusted friends, who were each to write a preliminary letter, of which he provided them with a "minuta," or rough draft, to certain persons whom he deemed likely to have access to the Emperor, and the kings of France, Spain, England, and Hungary respectively. Among these five friends Domenico Mazzinghi was to write to his friend Gioacchino Guasconi, Florentine ambassador in France, in order to convey to him, and through him to Charles VIII., the mind of Savonarola respecting the Council. This letter, with Guasconi's reply, has been preserved; but we reserve it for the present, because the whole subject of these letters will recur later, in connection with the trial of Savonarola. It seems probable that for greater security—though, as it turned out, with doubled risk—Mazzinghi despatched two copies of the letter to his correspondent by different messengers. One copy was intercepted by the spies of Lodovico Sforza, and forthwith communicated by him to the Pope through his brother, Cardinal Ascanio.[2] In the meanwhile, however, fresh events of a more stirring nature had occurred, and the last act of the tragic drama of Savonarola's life had already begun.

[1] Villari, ii. 132 *sqq.*; Perrens, Doc. xii. xiii. xiv., pp. 373 *sqq.*; Mansi, pp. 584 *sqq.*

[2] Villari, ii. 134.

CHAPTER XIX

THE ORDEAL BY FIRE [1]

THE intercepted letter to the ambassador at the French court, and the inevitable discovery, sooner or later, of the projected correspondence with the other sovereigns of Europe, could hardly have failed to issue in a catastrophe, even if the course of events had not taken—precisely at this juncture—an altogether unexpected turn. But the turn which they actually took had the effect of putting the incident of the letter, for the moment at least, into the background.

Already in the Lent of 1497, when Fra Domenico Buonvicino da Pescia was preaching in the church of San Domenico at Prato, he had found a redoubtable rival in Fra Francesco di Puglia, the Franciscan preacher in the church called della Pieve.[2] This friar seems to have made it his business to protest against the prophetical claims of Savonarola, "sparlando molto temerariamente contro F. Girolamo," as Burlamacchi tells us. To such a pitch did he allow

[1] For the incidents with which we are concerned in the present chapter a considerable mass of contemporary evidence is available, some of it that of eye-witnesses. Besides the Bonsi despatches, the letter of the friars of S. Marco to the Pope, and the official reports of the proceedings of the Signory and the Collegio, we have letters of Somenzi, of Girolamo Benivieni, and of Lionardo Strozzi, written at the time, the diary of Landucci, and the following tracts, of which the relevant sections have been published in full by Villari or by Villari and Casanova; viz. the newly-recovered *Cronaca* of Simone Filipepi (Villari and Casanova, *Scelta*, etc., pp. 453 *sqq.*), the *Epistola de Vita . . . F. H. S.*, of Fra Placido Cinozzi (*ibid.*, pp. 3 *sqq.*), the *Giornate* of Vivoli (Villari, ii. Doc. xvi.), and the *Vulnera Diligentis* of Fra Benedetto da Firenze (*ibid.*, Doc. xvii.). To these must be added the extremely valuable extract from the *Cronaca* of Dionisio Pulinari (edited by Conti in *A. S. I.*, III. xiii.), embodying, as it does, the narrative of Fra Mariano da Firenze, an eye-witness, and giving, in the only form now accessible, the Franciscan version of the story. The narratives of Nardi, Pitti, Cerretani, Parenti, etc. (all contemporaries of Savonarola), occurring in their respective chronicles or histories, here and there supply a detail of more or less interest. Burlamacchi's testimony, here as elsewhere, is to be received with caution.

[2] The parish or "people's" church (de plebe), as the parish priest was called "pievano," or "piovano" (plebanus).

himself to be carried by his imprudent zeal, or jealousy, that he publicly declared his readiness to enter a burning fire along with Fra Domenico, in order to test the truth of their respective allegations. In vain did Fra Girolamo Bartoli, Domenico's companion, try to persuade him to moderate his language, and eventually, with the encouragement of some of the local notabilities, a formal challenge was issued, and accepted by Domenico. The trial was to be held on Tuesday in Easter week. But whether it was that the challenger repented of his rashness, or that his superiors wisely disapproved of the whole affair, on Easter Monday Francesco suddenly left Prato, on the plea of an urgent summons to Florence.[1]

Now, in the Lent of 1498, the same two preachers were actively engaged at Florence, Domenico occupying the Duomo, which Fra Girolamo had vacated, and Francesco preaching at Santa Croce. It was not, however, until Savonarola had been finally silenced that matters reached a crisis. Then it was that Francesco, on Sunday, 25th March, enforced his denunciations of Fra Girolamo by a fresh challenge to the ordeal by fire.[2] That the challenge was first given by the Franciscan there can be no reasonable doubt. The fact is clearly stated, not merely by several of the chroniclers, but in more than one passage of the Bonsi despatches, and it is confirmed—if confirmation were needed—by the dates given, quite independently, by Benivieni and Landucci. It is not so easy to determine whether it was addressed, as Nardi relates, and as Francesco subsequently affirmed, to Fra Girolamo personally; or whether, as Benivieni and others tell us, its tenor was more general, expressing the willingness of the challenger to enter the fire with any one who might choose to maintain, by such a trial, the nullity of Savonarola's excommunication and the genuineness of his prophetic mission.[3] On the one

[1] Burlamacchi, p. 127. Burlamacchi, as is natural, attributes Francesco's hasty departure to a mere pretext (partissi con gran fretta . . . fece sua scusa, etc.).

[2] The date is given by Benivieni. Landucci supplies that of Domenico's counter-challenge (27th March), though, in common with Pulinari and others, he supposes that Domenico took the initiative.

[3] "E che da ora era contento disporsi ad entrare nel fuoco . . . *se il detto Fra G.* voleva ancora egli entrare nel fuoco seco" (Nardi, ed. Gelli, i. 117). "Rispondeva (Francesco) . . . che aveva electo Fra Girolamo perchè cessassi al tutto questo male," etc. (*Sottoscrizione dei Frati Minori*, in Villari, ii. Doc. xviii.). On the other hand, Burlamacchi writes: "Cominciò . . . ad exclamar contro di loro, provocando di nuovo *F. Domenico* all' experimento" (p. 127); while Benivieni reports that "invitò *qualunche*" (Gherardi, p. 216).

hand, no one could know, so well as Francesco himself, what Francesco had actually said or intended, and we know of no sufficient reason why he should be disbelieved. On the other hand, the tide of feeling ran so high, that each party was only too ready to attribute to the other unworthy motives and disingenuous conduct.[1] The simplest explanation of the conflicting evidence appears to us to lie in a single clause of Vivoli's narrative. According to him Francesco had declared his willingness to undergo the ordeal "con lo adversario."[2] Let it be supposed that by "the adversary" he meant Savonarola, but that he was understood to mean Domenico, or any other champion, and the whole difficulty disappears. This, at any rate, is the solution which is most creditable, or least discreditable, to all parties. And believing, as we do, in the good faith of both, it is the solution which commends itself to us.[3]

However this may be, it is certain that Savonarola himself simply ignored the challenge, and that he was most unwilling that the gauntlet thus thrown down should be taken up by any one on his behalf. For his own part, says Burlamacchi, he did not consider Francesco as an adversary worthy of his notice (con esso lui non ebbe mai che far nulla),[4] and he himself tells us that he was at first most strongly opposed to Domenico's action in the matter, and that he deeply deplored the misplaced and importunate zeal of those would-be friends who strove to bring the dispute to a head.[5]

[1] "Ipse nunc fugam quærit," writes Benivieni (*loc. cit.*). "Poi questo frate mutò parlare," says Vivoli (Villari, p. lxxii.). Burlamacchi (p. 132) makes Savonarola himself allege that "egli non fu da lui da principio provocato"; and even Pulinari (Conti, p. 370) asserts that Francesco at first expressed himself as willing to enter the fire with Domenico. But Burlamacchi's memory is not always to be trusted, and Pulinari makes the mistake of supposing that the first challenge came from Domenico.

[2] "Si messe a dire in pergamo . . . che con lo adversario era parato farne experimento," etc. (*loc. cit.*). Vivoli himself supposes that by "lo adversario" Domenico was meant.

[3] We do not, of course, profess any belief whatever in the good faith of the scoundrels who fomented these disputes for their own bad ends. We speak only of the Dominicans and the Franciscans themselves.

[4] Burlamacchi, p. 132. We pass over the other reasons alleged by Burlamacchi, because we shall presently have occasion to refer to the published protest of Savonarola himself, which belongs to a somewhat later stage of the proceedings.

[5] Savonarola's confession (Villari, p. clxxii.). We do not forget that this document has been falsified, but Savonarola's enemies could have no motive for inserting a passage which is altogether creditable to him.

Unfortunately, Fra Domenico did not share the prudence which, in this particular at least, his superior showed. On 27th March he published a series of "conclusions," or theses, which are described as requiring "to be proved by supernatural reasons and signs," and in attestation of which he declared himself ready to enter the fire with Francesco, "hoping, by the power of God our Saviour, and for His glory and the confirmation of this truth, and for the good of souls, to come forth safe and unhurt." Among these theses the assertion of the nullity of the censures, and of the lawfulness of disregarding them, occupies only the last place.[1]

The affair naturally gave rise to much excitement in the city, and both parties were cited before the Signory on 28th March. The object which their magnificent lordships had in view on this occasion was not (as prudence might have suggested) to quash the whole affair, but to bring the question at issue to definite terms, which should serve as the basis for further discussion by the civic authorities. As far as we can gather from the somewhat fragmentary minutes of the proceedings, and from the report of the Ten to Bonsi, the first document to be registered was the paper published by Domenico.[2] Then Francesco was ordered to reduce his challenge to writing.[3] In it the Franciscan declares that he is prepared to enter the fire with Fra Girolamo, but that with Domenico he has no quarrel (cum quo nulla est dissidentia). Another religious of his order is, however, quite ready to undergo the trial with Domenico, under the presidency of an impartial judge and in presence of all the religious (of the city, or of both Orders).[4] Obviously the parties were at cross purposes, and before the Signory

[1] "Conclusiones rationibus et signis supernaturalibus probandæ.—Ecclesia Dei indiget reformatione. Flagellabitur. Renovabitur. Florentia quoque post flagella renovabitur et prosperabitur. Infideles convertentur ad Christum. Hæc autem erunt temporibus nostris. . . . Non observantes (excommunicationem) non peccant" (Marchese, n. 24).

[2] It is probably this circumstance which has given rise to the opinion, expressed by many writers, that the affair originated with the Dominicans. Domenico had replied in writing to Francesco's verbal challenge. Hence his "sfida" would hold the first place in the register of documents, as it is in fact given first in the report of the Ten.

[3] Hence the phrase occurring in Francesco's paper, "sum paratus *ad instantiam et requisitionem Dominorum Florentinorum*." It would be a mistake to conclude from these words that the Signory had instigated him to throw out his verbal challenge three or four days previously. But they did now require him to state his terms in writing.

[4] Marchese, *loc. cit.*

could proceed further, a direct answer must be given to one or other of the two challenges.[1] Accordingly, Fra Mariano Ughi (O.P.) subscribed an undertaking to undergo the trial on behalf of the theses of Fra Domenico, together with the substitute whom Francesco had promised to name.[2] But this again was wide of the mark, as is plain from the terms of Francesco's *disfida*. The parties were, therefore, again summoned before the Signory on the following day, and each addressed the Board.[3] Fra Domenico declared himself not merely ready to enter the fire, but also to undergo any other ordeal if one more dangerous could be devised. He demanded that in the undertaking to be signed by Fra Francesco the words "per ignem" be explicitly set down. Fra Girolamo, he said, was destined for greater things, and that his time was not yet come. And whereas the challenge of Fra Francesco had been addressed to Fra Girolamo, let him now consent to accept himself, Fra Domenico, in his place. He added that this was, for himself, a welcome opportunity (una occasione desiderata). Subsequently he again asked that Francesco would condescend to accept himself as champion (che volessi humiliarsi a sè), because Fra Girolamo was reserved for greater things (a essere actore d'altre maggiore opere); therefore, let the name of Domenico be substituted in the challenge for that of Girolamo, for it was not in his power to constrain Fra Girolamo; and perhaps, he added, it would be contrary to the will of God. I can, however, he said, refer the matter to him. Subsequently he spoke as follows:—

"There are two ways out of the difficulty. One is that those with whom Fra Girolamo is concerned should draw up terms of a trial or ordeal with him; that is to say, the Pope and the Cardinals (!). If Fra Girolamo be worsted, let himself and his brethren be slain, banished, etc.[4] But if he should be victorious, let there be a general reform and renovation (che la emendatione et universale renovatione si facci, etc.) . . . For Fra G. has not yet accomplished the things which have to be done. Yet I do not wish to oblige him to accept this proposal.[5] The second plan

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[1] "Perche le soscriptioni . . . non si affrontano," say the Ten to Bonsi (4th April, Marchese, *ibid.*), "furono fatte le infrascripte subscriptioni," thereupon giving those of Ughi and Rondinelli.

[2] *Ibid.* Ughi's undertaking is dated 28th March.

[3] The minutes of Domenico's reply are given by Lupi, pp. 54-55, of Francesco's by Villari, p. xci. In both cases the proceedings are dated 29th March.

[4] The text changes abruptly from the singular to the plural: "Che se fra G. *perde* e' *sieno* uccisi, scacciati," etc.

[5] It is hardly to be supposed that even Savonarola would have seriously entertained the notion that Alexander in person could be expected to undergo

would be for Fra F. to name any one of his brethren, and we will produce a hundred champions, women, children, citizens, nay, even men of your own Order.[1] Thereupon Fra Mariano Ughi, who was present, offered to enter the fire."[2]

Francesco, on his side, declared that he was ready to abide by his challenge. He did not presume to compare himself with Fra Girolamo either in learning or in virtue; but his object in challenging him was to put an end once for all to the mischief that was being done; whereas, if Domenico and himself should both perish, everything would be in confusion as before. However, he would name three or four of his brethren, among whom Domenico might choose whom he pleased. Fra Giuliano Rondinelli, who, however, was not present, offered himself for the purpose, and on the following day signed an undertaking to undergo the ordeal with Ughi.[3] The champions finally selected on either side were, however, Rondinelli and Domenico.

Savonarola, for his part, published a statement of his own views and intentions regarding the ordeal. If the adversary were able and willing to promise that, in the event of his being victorious, the reform of the Church would be taken in hand, he would enter the fire with the fullest certainty that he would come forth unhurt. But the matter of the excommunication stands in no need of a proof by fire. And as for his prophecies, he has not sought to bind any one to believe in these further than he feels disposed. "We do but exhort men to live well, and to this end there is need of the fire of charity, of the miracle of faith; all the rest is to no purpose." As for others, those who truly feel themselves inspired to undergo the ordeal, will certainly come through it unhurt, "if the experiment takes place, *concerning which we still have our doubts.*" As for himself, he reserves himself for a greater work, for which he will be most ready to give his life. The time will come when the Lord will

the ordeal with himself. But Burlamacchi represents him as professing his willingness to enter the fire in a trial "con quelli di Roma," *i.e.* presumably with a champion to be named by the Pope, and in his presence (p. 132).

[1] "Et anche de' vostri frati." *Vostri* may be a blunder for *nostri*, but the climax seems to require (as the text has) *vostri*. Savonarola was on friendly terms with some at least of the Friars Minor.

[2] Lupi, *loc. cit.* Ughi, as has been said, had already drawn up and signed a paper to this effect.

[3] "Col sopradecto frate"; "the above-named friar" being Ughi (Marchese, *loc. cit.*). It is clear, from a document, to be presently referred to, that the Signory, so late as 30th March, did not expect Domenico to be Rondinelli's rival.

show forth the truth by supernatural signs; but this time will not be determined by any human arbitrament.[1]

It was to be expected that the motives of Savonarola and of Francesco in declining, the former absolutely, the other conditionally, to undergo the "experiment," would be made the subject of adverse comment by their respective adversaries. Pulinari plainly hints that Savonarola was afraid; while Benivieni, as has been seen, writes of Francesco: "Ipse nunc fugam quærit." But it is wiser, perhaps, to respect the reasons which the two friars themselves gave for their conduct.[2] It is particularly to be noted that whereas the Dominicans plainly express their confident persuasion that a miracle will take place, Rondinelli, in his undertaking, just as plainly says that he does not look for any supernatural intervention. He fully expects that both champions will perish in the flames; but he is willing that this should come to pass "for the good of souls," *i.e.* rather than that what he regarded as a dangerous error should take deeper root.[3] Herein Savonarola and his brethren find a strong argument in their own favour. If the Franciscans did not expect a miracle, they could not be sure of the truth of their assertions.[4] Yet, when Rondinelli declined to believe that miracles were to be had on demand, he was only giving utterance to a principle which, as has been seen, Savonarola himself enunciated in slightly different terms. His willingness, notwithstanding, to enter the fire, may as reasonably be ascribed to a mistaken zeal, as the readiness of Fra Domenico to believe that God would infallibly confirm his superior's claims by a supernatural sign.

Domenico Buonvicino and Mariano Ughi were, however, by no means the only persons who declared themselves ready to stake their lives on the "conclusions" published on behalf of Fra

[1] Villari, ii. 147-48.

[2] In addition to the reasons already given, Savonarola is said to have alleged the example of S. John Gualbert. "Benchè fosse uomo di gran santità, egli nondimeno non entrò in fuoco, ma vi mandò un altro de' suoi monaci, parendoli che l'ordine di quella cosa in quel tempo così richiedesse; ovvero fu così da Dio spirato" (Burlamacchi, p. 133).

[3] His words are: "Io . . . me obbligo di entrare nel fuoco col sopradecto frate . . . benchè io credo ardere; ma per salute delle anime sono molto contento."

[4] "Eorum nos miseret et piget, quod barbarica heresi, pro re sibi incerta, ut fatentur, propositum moriendi subire velint, et in propriam necem perpetua damnatione ruant, ut alienæ saluti (ut aiunt) consulant." (The Friars of S. Marco to the Pope, 3rd April; Gherardi, p. 220).

Girolamo. Undertakings similar to theirs were drawn up and laid before the Signory by two religious of distinguished family, both inmates of S. Marco. These were Fra Malatesta Sacramoro da Rimini and Fra Ruberto Salviati. The Ten, in their letter to Bonsi on the subject, lay particular stress on the offer made by these two friars, and Bonsi did not fail to bring it, more than once, under the notice of the Pope and the Cardinals.[1] But more than this. The brethren of S. Marco wrote a joint letter to the Pope in which they set forth their reasons for accepting the challenge of the Franciscan preacher, and declared that every one of them—and they numbered nearly 300—was ready to enter the fire, under assurances from Fra Girolamo that they would not be hurt.[2] But this unquestioning faith, this zeal for the cause, extended far beyond the comparatively narrow limits of the convent walls. Religious and laity of both sexes, and even children, expressed their eagerness to be chosen as champions to attest the truth of the conclusions. When Fra Domenico, preaching in the Duomo on 28th March, referred to the matter, a multitude of women rose in their places, and with loud cries proclaimed their desire to be allowed to undergo the trial.[3] The brethren of S. Marco, in their letter to the Pope, do not fail to call his attention to these evidences of religious enthusiasm, to which they confidently appeal as a sign of the justice of their cause, and which they naturally contrast with the paucity of corresponding offers made on the side of Francesco.[4] Indeed, it would seem that,

[1] Marchese, *loc. cit.*; Gherardi, pp. 221, 222.

[2] Gherardi, p. 219.

[3] "Quì sono tanti che desiderano entrare in questo fuoco che è uno stupore, così secolari come religiosi, come femmine et giovanetti. Diresti che fussino invitati a noze. In modo che, invitando hier mattina F. Domenico ad questo . . . si levorono ad un tratto molte donne, gridando: Io, Io—etc." So writes Benivieni to his friend Fortunati (29th March; Gherardi, p, 216). He shrewdly surmises, however, that the whole affair will end in smoke, though it is being pushed forward with great eagerness by the friars of S. Marco. Fra Placido Cinozzi relates how, as he walked one day in the convent garden with Savonarola, a boy came up to the Father to offer himself for the ordeal. Savonarola told him that God did not require this of him, but would bless his good purpose (*loc. cit.* p. 27; Burlamacchi, p. 134).

[4] "Neque modo nos, trecentos pene fratres, sed numerosam quoque non ignobilem aut rudem populi catervam, utriusque sexus, et aliarum religionum plerosque, ac moniales plurimas hujusmodi animi Sanctitas Vestra esse sciat: quos profecto non vana persuasio, non illecebræ . . . fascinarunt, sed mens recta, sincera devotio . . . ardentissima charitas in unum conciliavit," etc. On the other hand: "Ex adverso quidem perpaucos invenire licet," etc. Savonarola himself, according to Burlamacchi, confidently alleged this general enthusiasm as a sign which ought to be enough to convince any man of good-will.

besides Rondinelli, who was not in priest's orders, only one other member of the Franciscan house, a certain Fra Niccolò Pilli, had expressed his readiness to make the hazardous experiment.[1] And Pilli appears to have been a religious of not very edifying life.[2] The whole affair, as reported by the Ten, but more especially the formal undertaking of Malatesta and of Salviati, appears to have made a deep impression on Bonsi, who speaks of it as "a wonderful thing . . . for which our Lord God is very greatly to be thanked."[3]

Meanwhile, on 30th March, a debate on the subject was held in the Collegio. The numerous blunders of the official reporter, which can be only conjecturally amended, reflect the strong excitement of the moment ; and, taken as a whole, the effect of the minutes of the discussion is singularly graphic and life-like. A brief summary may be of interest.

Antonio Canigiani holds that this is no subject for discussion in the Palazzo. It should rather be treated of in Rome, where they canonise saints. As for ourselves we should have done better to obey the Brief. It is very doubtful whether the proposed ordeal will heal the prevalent discord.

Girolamo Rucellai agrees with Canigiani. We have had enough of Frati and Arrabbiati and their squabbles. Let us attend to union among ourselves. If an ordeal would heal the discord in the city, let them invoke not fire only, but water and air and earth ; but let us attend to business, not to these Frati.

Luigi Corsi, on the other hand, regards the matter as of importance to all Christendom. It would be well, however, that the discussion should be left to ecclesiastics, and the matter referred to the Vicar, whose decision should be upheld. He thinks, however, that the ordeal may be productive of much good. If Savonarola is victorious, it will be an honour to the city to possess such a treasure. If both perish, we shall know that we have been deceived (lavorati) by both ; and then the citizens can attend to the common weal.

Giovanni Canacci is ashamed and indignant that such a matter should have been brought forward. Our ancestors would have blushed to think

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[1] Burlamacchi, p. 137.

[2] Filipepi, p. 483.

[3] "Parmi cosa maravigliosa et da dovere muovere ogni persona, et da doverne essere obbligatissimo al nostro Signore Iddio" (Gherardi, p. 221). And again : "Et referendo particolarmente . . . le perfecte conditioni et qualità di Fra Malatesta . . . risposi che non era da credere s'ingannassi un tanto uomo" (p. 222) ; and even Cardinal Sforza declared that he esteemed Malatesta "per un huomo perfecto," but that he regretted his having mixed himself up in this affair (*ibid.*). The undertakings of Malatesta and Salviati are given by Burlamacchi, pp. 135-36.

it possible that such matters should be discussed by us, which make us the laughing-stock of the world. Let the Signory deliver us from this disgrace without more ado. Fire, air, or water are all one to him if only the city may be pacified.

Nero del Nero.—This is an ecclesiastical matter ; let us leave it alone and tell these friars to leave it alone too, and to preach the Word of God.

Girolamo Capponi has no particular desire to see a miracle. Let the Signory turn the matter over to the Vicar, and let the city reform itself, and put a stop to the nocturnal lawlessness of some of our young men.

Guidantonio Vespucci.—It is an evil generation which seeketh a sign, and we are only facilitating matters for them. It would be well if one who lays claim to supernatural powers could prove them without committing homicide. The affair is a fad (gara) of the friars, whose busy tongues are the cause of a great part of our dissensions. If there is to be an ordeal, let him undergo it on whose behalf we are contending, if indeed we are contending for him.

Agnolo Niccolini.—If the ordeal would benefit the city, I should be in favour of it ; but it is more likely to breed scandal. It would be much better to write to the Pope about it, and let him send a bishop to preside ; and let the condition be that if the Friar wins we shall hear no more of the interdict.

Antonio Malegonelle.—The matter is in substance ecclesiastical, but it is to be supposed that the champions have maturely considered what they are about. And as they have come to terms, it is our business to see that the affair is rightly carried out. Under other circumstances it might be well to refer the matter to the Pope. But, as things are, it will be best to carry it through, and then we shall know the truth. Let the Signory take good care that neither party be suffered to shirk the trial.

Antonio Strozzi thinks that for the declaration of the truth one miracle is as good as another. Why not let them try an experiment unattended with risk of life? They might undertake to cross the Arno without getting wet.[1] Let them obtain the permission of their superiors. But he greatly desires to see some decisive sign.

Francesco Gualterotti.—It does not belong to you either to enforce the affair, or to give permission for it. But as the parties have arranged their own terms, the matter will turn to our advantage (le cose sono venute a termine desiderato). Encourage them to carry out their plan, and take good care that no one shirks his part.

Luca Corsini.—The fire of dissension is ablaze already. Let the matter proceed, for it has gone too far to allow of its being quashed.

Ormanozzo Deti.—Let the affair proceed, though for my part I don't think much will come of it, since the person who is most concerned is putting another in his place.

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[1] According to Nardi, one of the speakers suggested that the friars might be accommodated with a vessel of warm water in which they might try their experiment with less discomfort.

Domenico Mazzinghi (a firm supporter of Savonarola) would have the matter to go forward, "for this miracle will tend to the glory of God and the peace of the city."

Several speakers in succession express themselves in favour of the trial. Among them, Soderini thinks that God should be thanked for this opportunity; for since the friars have committed themselves to definite conclusions, the issue must needs be for the honour of God. Lorenzo Lenzi advises that public prayers, processions, and works of charity should be undertaken, with a view to a happy issue. Of the rest, some are strongly in favour of the ordeal, two are in favour of cold water, as less dangerous to life, two are afraid that the affair will lead to a tumult, and two are heartily ashamed of the whole business. Some support, others oppose, the proposal to refer the case to Rome, or to the Vicar of the Archbishop. Braccio Martelli rather appositely remarks that one who is ready to enter the fire ought not to be afraid to go to Rome. Agnolo de' Bardi would like to see the experiment tried on all the friars.

The result of the division on the question as to whether the experiment should be allowed to take place, is not recorded in the official report of the debate as published by Lupi. But that the result was a vote in the affirmative sense is implied by another document published by Villari, and bearing the same date (30th March), in which the conditions of the trial are laid down. The document commences with a long preamble, which states that a controversy has arisen between the religious of S. Marco and the Minorites; that the Dominicans have published certain conclusions which the Franciscans deny; that one of each party has given an undertaking in writing that he is ready to enter the fire with the other, on the understanding that credence is reasonably to be given to him who shall come forth unhurt; and which declares that the motive for the decision arrived at is the desire to put an end, in every event, to the popular dissension now prevalent.[1] The decision is, that if the Dominican champion should perish in the flames, then Savonarola and Domenico are to incur the penalty of perpetual banishment.[2] If, on the other hand, the Franciscan alone

[1] "Convenerunt ad invicem, promictentes eorum propria manu se (*sic*) subscribendo papirum . . . ut ex igne exeunti inleso rationabiliter credi possit; ad hoc, ut seditio popularis tollatur e medio in omni eventu eorum altercationis" (Villari, p. xcii.).

[2] It is clear that Domenico was not then expected to be the actual champion.

should perish, the same penalty is declared against Francesco di Puglia and Fra Lorenzo Corsi. But if both should perish, then the penalty is to fall on the Dominicans alone. Lastly, if either party should fail to carry out its undertaking, this party will incur the sentence of banishment aforesaid.

The clause by which it is ordained that, if both champions should perish, the Dominicans alone were to be punished, seems at first sight a very one-sided arrangement. But, on a closer scrutiny, it appears to be, after all, not unreasonable. From one point of view, Domenico might rightly be regarded as the aggressor. The Signory take account only of written documents duly attested, and of such, he, and not his rival, had put forth the first. Moreover, it was he, or his representative, who claimed to sustain certain positive conclusions, confessedly not pertaining to the Catholic faith as such, which needed to be established by a miracle. The other party guaranteed no miracle. They only maintained that if a miracle were to take place, it would not be on the side of Domenico. The death of both champions would then be (according to the terms of their "sfida") a clear indication that God did not intend to confirm in this fashion the assertions, prophetic or otherwise, advanced by Domenico on behalf of Savonarola. Nor is it at all clear that this decision was revoked by another which is recorded as having been arrived at a few days later, viz. on 6th April. In this it is set down that if Fra Domenico should perish, Savonarola is to be regarded as a rebel, and must leave the city within three hours. Nothing is here said of Francesco or Corsi. But if the resolution may be understood as supplementing the former one, it only fixes a limit of time within which the sentence, in Savonarola's case, is to be carried out. It is obvious that on the hypothesis that Fra Girolamo should be proved (on his acknowledged champion's own terms) to have been a deceiver of the people, there was *prima facie* a stronger reason for insisting upon his immediate withdrawal than existed in the case of Francesco, who had achieved but a very inferior notoriety, and of whom it could not be pretended that he was a power in the city. At the same time it is possible that the second resolution was the result of a vote taken in haste, that it was intended as revoking, and not as supplementing the previous arrangement, and that it was the outcome of the activity of Fra Girolamo's enemies. But there is, we submit, no proof that this was so.

The "cimento," as it was called, was originally fixed for Friday, 6th March. But on the evening of the 5th, if we may trust the unsupported statement of Lionardo Strozzi, a message reached S. Marco that the event had been, by command of the Signory, postponed till the Saturday.[1] It would seem that it was at first proposed to hold the ordeal in the afternoon, but that Fra Girolamo expressed a preference for the morning, on the ground that sobriety was the best preparation for such a function. The place appointed was the Piazza of the Signory.

The two communities of S. Marco and Santa Croce prepared for the ordeal by prayer and fasting. Burlamacchi and others describe the processions which were held in the former convent, and mention that the brethren had permission to fast thrice in the week on bread and water; while Pulinari, on his side, speaks in some detail of the austerities practised on the occasion by the Franciscans.[2] However much Fra Girolamo may have regretted the rashness of his too eager companion, it is clear that he was determined to take every precaution against malice or accident. He sent Fra Malatesta and Francesco Davanzati to the Signory to beg that measures might be taken to secure that the competitors should unmistakably pass through the fire.[3] A platform was erected in the middle of the Piazza della Signoria, on which the piled-up fuel was so arranged as to form an avenue through which the two friars were to walk. Savonarola requested that the pile should be ignited at the further end, so that there should be no means of escape in that direction, and that as soon as Domenico and Francesco had entered the narrow passage, the fuel behind them should be at once set on fire. There would thus be no possibility of fraud, and no opportunity for cowardice. Such at least was the ostensible motive for the arrangement. But another reason has been assigned for the request. Pulinari ascribes

[1] Strozzi to the Francesco Fortunati, 6th April (Perrens, p. 380). The writer suggests that the Signory have postponed the cimento in hopes of receiving a Brief from Rome prohibiting the whole affair. He thinks it will not come off. It is, perhaps, more probable that, in view of the enthusiasm of Savonarola's followers, they wished to gain time for the decision as to the more stringent terms under which the penalty of banishment was (conditionally) decreed against Savonarola on 6th April.

[2] Conti, p. 372.

[3] Examination of Davanzati (Villari, ii. p. ccxlvii.). In Savonarola's own examination (p. clxxiii.), and in Mariano's narrative embodied in Pulinari's chronicle (Conti, p. 371), Malatesta is named in place of Davanzati. Probably both were sent at different times.

the message of Savonarola to a desire to give to the whole affair as terrible an appearance as possible, in the hope that Domenico's rival would be frightened at the sight of the preparations made, and that thus the ordeal might be avoided. And this version of the matter would seem to be confirmed by Savonarola's confession at his trial. But the statements found in this confession, so far as they are unfavourable to Fra Girolamo, are deservedly open to the gravest suspicion; and it may be that Pulinari's version of the story is based, so far as this particular is concerned, on that untrustworthy document.[1]

The Signory made somewhat elaborate arrangements for the avoidance of a tumult. The measures which were taken are described in detail by Somenzi, and the circumstance that he regarded them as most wise rather suggests that they were not altogether impartial. All foreigners, among whom the Sienese are particularly mentioned, were ordered to leave Florence. The city gates were closed, none but persons of rank being allowed to enter; and the approaches to the Piazza were barricaded, with the exception of three, at each of which a strong guard was placed. The carrying of arms by unauthorised persons was strictly prohibited, and to preserve order a body of troops was stationed in the square, while the sixteen gonfalonieri of the city companies, each in command of some twenty or twenty-five men, patrolled the several quarters of the city. Orders were sent to the troops before Pisa, and in the neighbourhood of Siena, that on no pretext were they to leave their posts. Even a summons from the Ten was to be disregarded, and no message was to be obeyed unless it came direct from the Signory. "Then," adds Somenzi, "they summoned all the chiefs of the party of the Frateschi . . . and kept them within the palace." This, it is to be remembered, is the open avowal of a witness bitterly hostile to Fra Girolamo, though we are rather inclined to think that in this particular the wish was father to the thought, and that so obviously one-sided a step was not really taken. At any rate, no complaint on this head is made, so far as we are aware, by the friends of Savonarola who have put on record their reminiscences

[1] "G. B. Ridolfi told me that the Franciscan would never enter the fire; and such, in fact, was my own belief. Now, if he were not to enter, our man was not bound to enter. Wherefore . . . to frighten him the more, I took measures that the fire might be a big one," etc. Pulinari's account corresponds, clause by clause, with that of the confession.

of this fateful day. But there is a matter of which they do complain, and of which Somenzi has made no mention. In one corner of the Piazza, Doffo Spini was allowed to station himself, with some hundreds of armed followers, many of them mounted, and their presence was nothing short of an open menace to Savonarola and his supporters. So far as we can see, the only explanation of the permission thus accorded to the Compagnacci is that they were allowed to be present under arms ostensibly with a view to keeping order, and as watching the event in the interests of the Franciscans.[1] For, in addition to the main body of troops, under the command of Gioacchino della Vecchia, the Constable of the Palazzo, there was also a special guard, captained by Marcuccio Salviati, the firm friend of Savonarola, drawn up in the immediate vicinity of the Palazzo, where a space had been set apart for the religious of the two Orders.[2] Under such circumstances it would perhaps have been difficult, though it would certainly have been desirable, to insist on the disarming and disbanding of Spini's company. But we shall have occasion to return to this matter a little later.

On the morning of the 7th, after celebrating High Mass, Savonarola made a brief address to his brethren and the faithful assembled in S. Marco. He reminded them that there were two kinds of prophecy, absolute (as when Isaiah said: "Behold a virgin shall conceive") and conditional (as when Jonah proclaimed that Nineveh should be destroyed). In the course of the previous night he had received a divine intimation of each kind. That under all circum-

[1] With naïve simplicity Pulinari suggests that God Himself provided this protection for his brethren! "Ed ecco li cuori di molti giovani li quali erano de' piu nobili . . . della città, che del tutto armati sedevano sopra cavalli barbati . . . Costoro con gran strepito entrarono in Piazza in favore e difesa de' Frati (minori), la qual compagnia nel volgo si chiamò il Compagnaccio; *e ben parve che Iddio la mandasse loro e che la fussi loro a uopo*" (Conti, p. 374).

[2] There seems every reason to suppose that della Vecchia was well disposed to Savonarola. Villari says that on the following day he enforced the orders of the Signory against the defenders of S. Marco; but this is an error, as will appear in the sequel. Both Salviati and della Vecchia are mentioned in the "process" of Fra Girolamo. "Marcuccio Salviati mi fu menato da Fra Ruberto suo fratello inanci al caso del fuoco . . . per che io lo confortassi al ben vivere et così fei: *et hebbilo caro per haverlo amico:* et lui mi fece molte proferte inanci si partisse; dicendo io metterei la vita per voi. Intesi Giovanni della Vecchia che era nostro amico da frate Cosimo Tornaboni; il che hebbi charo; ma non li parlai mai" (Villari, ii. Append. p. clxii.). It is possible that the words which we have italicised are an addition by Ser Ceccone, but there is no reason to doubt the substantial truths of the passage.

stances they would be victorious, this he declared to be unconditionally predestined.[1] But whether the experiment would take place or no, on this point he had received no certain knowledge. He inclines to the belief that it will take place, seeing that such preparations have been made, but God has not revealed this secret to him.[2] The discourse began and ended with a fervent exhortation to prayer.

All the authorities agree in contrasting the arrival and subsequent conduct of the two communities. The Franciscans were first on the ground.[3] They came without pomp or ceremony, and on their arrival quietly awaited the sequel, while their two champions, Francesco and Rondinelli, betook themselves to the chapel of the Signory, where they engaged in prayer.[4] Pulinari, as might be expected, dwells with complacency on the absence of display on the part of his brethren. The writers on the other side tell us that they came without any signs of religious observance, "as if to see a tournament," that they spent the time gossiping with their friends, and that Francesco and Rondinelli were nowhere to be seen.[5]

The Dominicans, on the other hand, arrived in procession about half an hour later, chanting the 67th Psalm: "Let God arise and let His enemies be scattered," and others expressive of their assured hopes of victory.[6] Preceded by the cross-bearer and the religious of S. Marco, vested according to their rank, came Fra Domenico in a

[1] "Noi habbiamo havuto sta notte cosa assoluta e cosa conditionata. La assoluta è che havemo havere vittoria ad ogni modo, e questo è assoluto e predestinato." The discourse is printed at the end of the volume of *Prediche sopra l'Esodo.*

[2] "Credo piu presto di sì che di nò: perchè la cosa è molto innanzi: pure questo segreto di Dio non ho."

[3] This is asserted not only by Somenzi and Pulinari (p. 372), but also by Nardi (p. 119).

[4] Pulinari, p. 374.

[5] "Entrorno . . . senza processione, senza paramenti, senza lume, come se avessino andare a vedere una giostra" (Vivoli; Villari, p. lxxv.). "Stavansi là cicalando con secolari, come saccomanni senza religione alcuna" (Filipepi, p. 482). Of Francesco Fra Benedetto says: "Stavasi su fitto non so dove in Palazzo con quello F. Giuliano (Rondinelli), et nessuno di loro usciva fuori" (Villari, p. lxxxiv.). As a set-off against these gratuitously ill-natured innuendoes it may be mentioned that Pulinari always speaks of the Dominican champion by his sobriquet as Fra Domenico *Fattoraccio.*

[6] Somenzi says "half an hour" later. Pulinari extends the delay to two hours. The evidence as to the duration of the proceedings is rather confusing. Apparently the event was fixed for 10 A.M., or thereabouts, and it was late in the afternoon before all parties returned home.

cope of cloth of gold, and after him Fra Girolamo, bearing the Blessed Sacrament, and accompanied by some sixty men bearing torches and the familiar red crosses. Having placed the pyx containing the Blessed Sacrament on an altar which had been prepared beforehand in that portion of the Loggia which was assigned to his community, Fra Girolamo knelt in prayer while the Psalms and the Litanies were being sung. If Fra Mariano's memory might be trusted, we should have to believe that, by some mistake—regarded by the Minorites as ominous of the event—in the chanting of the Litanies the Franciscan saints were invoked, while those of the Order of Preachers were omitted. It is to be supposed, gravely observes Pulinari, that they were ashamed to invoke their own saints, who would surely be aware of their excommunication, while they perhaps imagined that S. Francis and his companions had not heard of it. The remark is foolish enough, but it serves to show the state of feeling which prevailed, and the incredible simplicity of men who were, to say the least of it, very much in earnest. The same writer further asserts that the petition for the humiliation of the enemies of the Church was also omitted. As for the Franciscans, they could take no part in public prayer with those whom they regarded as excommunicate, and contented themselves with answering by a silent "Amen" the various invocations. Their silence, however, was (if we may believe Pulinari) interpreted by the supporters of Savonarola as indicative of fear, and they had to endure many taunts and gibes on the score of their faint-heartedness. And so, he adds, they stood there like lambs in the midst of wolves, shivering with cold and hunger, but trusting in God, for the defence of whose Church they had come thither.

That a long and tedious delay now ensued, occasioned by certain preliminary negotiations, is agreed on all hands. It is not so clear to which of the two parties the delay is to be principally ascribed. Each, of course, lays the blame on the other; and a comparison of the several narratives leads to no certain conclusion, but only to conjecture more or less probable. This much, however, is beyond question. The two Franciscans stayed within the palace in immediate communication with the authorities. Savonarola, on the other hand, remained at his post before the altar, while Domenico came and went, consulting his superior at each stage of the proceedings, so that to the casual observer it might seem that he, rather than Francesco, was protracting the affair; and it is likely enough

that, as Filipepi asserts, rumours to this effect were diligently circulated by the enemies of Fra Girolamo.

But what were the negotiations about? According to the Dominican account, Francesco began by demanding that Domenico should change not merely his vestments but his habit, and even —according to some—his inner garments, lest perchance they should have been "enchanted." Savonarola at first objected, but finally yielded at the instance of Piero degli Alberti. Pulinari simply says that the Franciscans proposed that both parties should change their clothes, and that this was done. Believing, as we do, in the good faith of the Franciscans no less than of their rivals, we are inclined to think that in this particular their version of the story is the true one; possibly the change of raiment was intended as a precaution not merely against "enchantment," but against any physical protection from the effects of the fire which either party might have been tempted to adopt. At the same time it must be admitted that the Dominican account is very circumstantial, for not only is Alessandro Strozzi named as the religious with whom Domenico actually exchanged garments, but it is further related that when he was summoned for the purpose by Savonarola, believing that he was to be called upon to enter the fire, he came forward with great alacrity, kneeling for his superior's blessing with the words *Te Deum laudamus*. The simplest explanation of the discrepancy appears to be that the proposal came (as Pulinari admits) from the Franciscans, who were, however, content that their own champion should himself do what was demanded of his rival, and that Savonarola at first demurred, but afterwards yielded; while the question of Francesco's change of raiment gave rise (as was natural under the circumstances) to no discussion. A further objection seems to have been raised to Fra Domenico entering the fire with a crucifix in his hands, but the witnesses do not agree as to the manner in which this difficulty was settled. The crisis of the discussion came, however, when the Franciscans understood that it was Domenico's intention to carry the Blessed Sacrament into the midst of the flames. Against this proposal the Franciscans at once objected. It was dishonourable to our Lord; it was to make the most sacred mysteries of the Christian faith, rather than the truth of Domenico's theses, the subject of the "experiment"; and, quite apart from scholastic answers to the scholastic arguments about substance and accidents brought forward by Domenico, the course which he proposed to take was quite

certain to provoke scandal. Nor was it only the opponents and the enemies of Savonarola who perceived the force of these objections. Nardi, a warm admirer of Fra Girolamo, expresses himself on the subject not less explicitly, if less emphatically, than Somenzi.[1] This, then, was a point on which neither the Franciscans nor the Signory could be expected to yield; while as for Domenico, he believed that he had received, mediately or immediately, a divine intimation on the subject, so that any concession on his side was out of the question.[2] "I am certain," he afterwards wrote at his trial, "that I should not have been burnt, and so there would have been no scandal, but edification. . . . When I shall stand in the presence of Christ I will make it clear to all these people whether I acted of my own motion or by the will and inspiration (movimento) of God, who on that day willed that it should be so." Every one is aware, he adds, that the *species Sacramenti* can be destroyed, much more he who carries them. A thousand consecrated Hosts would not save from destruction a man who had not the truth on his side. "If then scandal arose, God, whose will I carried out, will reward me; for I have gained much merit from this . . . grievous persecution."[3] Such being the convictions entertained on both sides, a deadlock was inevitable. And after a great deal of time had been expended on a fruitless discussion of the subject, it became evident that the ordeal could not, under the circumstances, be allowed to take place. The crowd of intending spectators had now been kept in suspense for many hours, and had, moreover, been drenched by a heavy shower of rain. Angry murmurs of discontent began to make themselves heard; and even had the Signory been as favourably disposed to Savonarola as they were actually hostile, they could hardly have acted otherwise than they did by bidding both parties return home. Each, of course, claimed a moral victory; each laid the blame of the fiasco on the other; but that Fra Girolamo saw very clearly that the issue of the event would be turned to his

[1] "La quale cosa alla Signoria ed a ciascheduno altro parve inhonesta et infanda" (Somenzi to Sforza, 7th April; del Lungo, n. 39). "Non vollono . . . i frati minori acconsentirlo, allegando *molte e evidenti ragioni*, con dire che ardendo (come naturalmente potrebbe ardere) . . . ne seguirebbe gran cagione di scandalizzare le menti degli uomini deboli e ignoranti" (Nardi, i. 120).

[2] "Ma fu rivelato a F. Silvestro Maruffi, che in verun modo v'entrasse (Domenico) senza il Sacramento" (Burlamacchi, p. 142).

[3] Domenico's autograph confession (Villari, ii. Append. p. cxcix.). This valuable document has fortunately been preserved together with the falsified version of the same which was drawn up by, or for, the Signory.

discredit is attested by his request that the Signory would provide an escort to conduct himself and his brethren to S. Marco; whereas in the morning he had been content with his own unofficial body-guard.[1] The escort was given, and under its protection the procession returned, pursued by the insults and execrations of Savonarola's declared enemies, with whom many of those who had hitherto been neutral, or even friendly, now allied themselves. The cry was that the people had been befooled by the Friar.[2] On their arrival at S. Marco, Fra Girolamo mounted the pulpit and addressed the women who had persevered there in prayer, explaining that, as the failure of the ordeal was due to the frivolous and fraudulent proceedings of the opposite party, the result must be considered as entirely favourable to the cause which he had at heart.[3] The *Te Deum* was then sung. Needless to say, there was likewise a *Te Deum* at Santa Croce.[4]

So far as regards the actual facts, concerning which, if we except the incident of the exchange of garments, there is no dispute. It is quite otherwise when we come to enquire into the motives and intentions of the parties concerned. If we may believe Filipepi, the Franciscan champion never intended to enter the fire at all, but only to supply a pretext under which Doffo Spini and his gang might attack the Frateschi, and slay Fra Girolamo and his followers.[5] Moreover, he declares that Doffo had made arrangements that on a sign to be given from the Palazzo he was to make the attack, and, further, that the sign was actually given, but that "come a Dio piacque" he changed his mind. All this he professes to have heard from Spini himself, and Vivoli adds the circumstance that the affair was spoken of at certain social or convivial meetings which used to be held in the shop of Filipepi's brother, the famous painter, Sandro Botticelli.[6] Now, that Doffo Spini was capable of any crime may readily be admitted; that he had been actively engaged for some time past in plots against Fra Girolamo is attested not merely by

[1] Burlamacchi, p. 143.

[2] "Fremeva il popolo come quasi schernito" (Pitti, p. 52).

[3] Fra Benedetto, *apud* Villari, iii. Append. p. xc.

[4] Pulinari, p. 375.

[5] "Ma . . . il disegno dell' altra parte non era in verità di voler entrare nel fuoco, ma di far con questa occasione tagliare a pezzi da' detti giovani (the Compagnacci) fra Girolamo *con tutti li suoi, che erono da* 150 *persone*," etc. (Villari, p. 481).

[6] Filipepi, *loc. cit.*; Vivoli, *apud* Villari, ii. Append. p. lxxiv.

Filipepi, but by the unfriendly chronicler, Cerretani;[1] that his presence on the occasion, together with a band of armed companions and followers, had no good purpose is sufficiently obvious; and that a sign for the murderous attack which he probably intended to make may have been agreed upon, and actually given, by some highly placed traitor in the Palazzo we can well believe. But it would not be wise to accept, as the plain unvarnished truth, Filipepi's recollections of what a contemptible braggart may have subsequently said in the midst of his boon companions. And for our part, we see no reason whatever to doubt the good faith of the Franciscans. The first challenge, it will be remembered, was given at Prato, where it can hardly be supposed that the machinations of the Florentine Compagnacci were the moving cause. Moreover, the earnest prayers of the Franciscan friars, both in preparation for the event and on the day itself, hardly leave room for doubt as to their honesty of purpose. If we suppose that Spini promised Francesco and Rondinelli that he and his companions would protect them against foul play, and that he afterwards boasted of his actual intentions, there is foundation enough for the apocryphal story (as we believe it to be) that they had received assurances to the effect that the ordeal would not in any case be allowed to take place. The Signory may be justly blamed for indiscretion and weakness, if not for partiality, in that they allowed Spini and his armed company to take up the position which they occupied in the Piazza. And there may perhaps have been one or more among their number who would have been glad to see Doffo's party violent and victorious. But there is at least no sufficient ground for charging them, as a body, with complicity in all the nefarious designs of the Compagnacci. The committee appointed to make the final arrangements was fairly chosen. It consisted of four members, Alberti and Antinori on the side of the Franciscans, Gualterotti and Ridolfi on that of Savonarola; and he himself could not have chosen more determined supporters.[2] Vivoli and Fra Benedetto both incidentally mention the courtesy with which Savonarola was treated, during the wearisome negotiations, by Alberti, nor can we without proof take their word for it that this courtesy was nothing better than a mask for treachery.[3] Lastly,

[1] Filipepi, p. 484; Villari, ii. 139.

[2] The names are given by Fra Benedetto (Villari, ii. Append. p. lxxxiv.), and by Burlamacchi, p. 140.

[3] Vivoli, *apud* Villari, *loc. cit.*, p. lxxvi.; Benedetto, *ibid.*, pp. lxxxv. *sqq.*

when at one point of the proceedings the aristocratic ruffians under command of Doffo made an ugly rush, they were beaten back by Salviati's guard;[1] nor did they again proceed to open violence until the following day. For the present their valour exhausted itself in showering insults, as has been said, upon Savonarola and his companions.

It only remains to say a word, in conclusion, about the views of the Pope and his court with reference to the ordeal. Burlamacchi declares that the Signory wrote to the Pope, asking his permission for the carrying out of the cimento, that the cardinals assembled in consistory unanimously decided that the permission should be refused, and that they notified this decision to the Signory, but that the answer came too late. Burlamacchi adds that "the Pope feared lest, if the experiment should succeed, he should lose his tiara (la mitra), and this was why he refused permission." The documents published within recent years enable us to correct these statements; nor can we agree with Gherardi that Burlamacchi's account is substantially correct. No permission was asked; though the Pope was, of course, informed of the matter in hand, not merely through Bonsi, but also, as has been said, by a letter from the community of S. Marco addressed to himself. On the first occasion on which Bonsi mentioned the matter, the Pope "was struck with astonishment" on hearing of the undertaking of Domenico and Ughi (stava bene admirato delle subscriptioni facte), and asked if the affair would really be carried through. Bonsi replied that if the Pope would absolve Fra Girolamo the matter would probably go no further, but that otherwise, under stress of necessity, it would go forward, unless the Franciscans should change their mind. Nor was it until 8th March, the day after the event (though the news of it had not yet reached Rome), that the Pope and Perugia gave expression to their strong disapproval of the experiment (damnandolo molto); a position from which Bonsi in vain endeavoured to move them by insisting on the high qualities of Malatesta and Salviati. On the following day two of the Cardinals declared to Bonsi that the affair had given the greatest displeasure to the court, principally because one of the conclusions in question affirmed the nullity of the excommunication. This was a matter on which, very naturally, the Pope would tolerate no discussion.

It is very clear, then, that while Alexander disapproved of the

[1] Benedetto, *ibid.* p. lxxxvi.

cimento, he was by no means a victim to the fear of which Burlamacchi speaks, and he took no effective measures whatever to hinder the proceedings. But neither is there any proof that, as some writers have suggested, he secretly aided and abetted them. When the news of what had actually happened at last reached Rome, the shifty policy of the unworthy Pontiff led him at once to address two briefs to Francesco and to the brethren of his convent respectively, in which he thanked them for the zeal which they had shown in this miserable affair.[1] Later on, when the tide of popular favour had even more decidedly turned against Fra Girolamo, the Signory then in office proposed and carried a resolution conferring on the Convent of Santa Croce an annual pension of 60 lire, to be drawn on 7th April.[2] But the very first time that they sent to claim it, they were contemptuously told to take the price of the blood of him whom they had betrayed.[3]

[1] The Briefs, dated 11th April, are given in Quétif, ii. 462-63 (Villari, ii. 179). They certainly do not prove the previous existence of any deep-laid scheme.

[2] The deliberation on the subject is given in Perrens, i. 513 (Villari, ii. 161).

[3] "Ecco, prendete il prezzo del sangue tradito" (Burlamacchi).

CHAPTER XX

THE RIOT

NOTWITHSTANDING the tension of strong feeling, which was the natural effect of the abortive ordeal, the evening and night of Saturday, 7th April, and the morning of Palm Sunday, 8th April, passed without any open disturbance at Florence. It is clear, however, that Fra Girolamo had a strong presentiment of an approaching disaster, for on the Sunday morning, in a brief discourse to the people assembled at S. Marco, he once more expressed his readiness to offer his life as a sacrifice for the cause which he had at heart.[1] There could, in fact, be no doubt that the more unscrupulous of his enemies had determined to bring about his utter ruin, so far as it was in their power to achieve this result; and in the present conjuncture of affairs nothing was needed but some focus of excitement in which the heat of evil passions might be kindled to a flame. Such a focus was unfortunately provided in the Duomo on the Sunday afternoon, for it was understood that Fra Mariano Ughi, one of those who had signed a written undertaking to enter the fire on behalf of Domenico's theses, was to preach there after Vespers. His sermon, as may well be supposed, was anticipated with intense interest by the adherents of Fra Girolamo, and with a good deal of curiosity by others; while the Compagnacci, on their part, were determined either to prevent the delivery of the discourse, or to bring it to a speedy conclusion by raising a brawl, similar to that by which Savonarola himself had been silenced on Ascension Day of the previous year.[2] Pobably the Cathedral chapter would have acted in the best interests

[1] "Fece . . . un sermone, benchè breve, molto divoto e lagrimevole, quasi prenunziando la sua instante tribulazione: il fine del quale fu in effetto, che egli si offeriva in sacrificio a Dio, ed era parato a supportar la morte per le sue pecorelle, etc. . . . Tanto fu sempre questo uomo simile a se stesso," etc. (Nardi, i. 121-22).

[2] Filipepi, *Cronaca* (in Villari and Casanova, *Scelta*, etc.), p. 487; Burlamacchi, p. 144; Parenti (in Ranke, *Historisch-Biographische Studien*, p. 315), etc.

of all concerned had they given public and timely notice that Ughi would not be allowed to preach; but they seem to have taken a very inadequate view of their responsibilities. Treating the whole affair with unseemly levity, they thought to prevent the delivery of the discourse by the rather childish expedient of postponing the commencement of Vespers.[1] The rumour soon began to spread that there would be no sermon, and the matter became the theme of heated discussion, the enemies of the Friar striking the benches and insulting the devout Piagnoni and bidding them begone.[2] At last Antonio Alamanni, one of the Compagnacci, mounted the steps of the pulpit, and calling attention by hammering on the panels, loudly proclaimed that Ughi would not preach, and that the women there assembled had better go home.[3] If we may believe Parenti, it was one of the Frateschi or Piagnoni who, roused to indignation by the disgraceful conduct of those who hustled himself and his companions, first drew his sword. If it were so, there is nothing to be surprised at in the circumstance; and it would have been only the first of several instances in which the followers of Fra Girolamo allowed themselves on this occasion to be provoked by their enemies to acts the consequences of which only recoiled upon themselves.[4] At any rate, a scene of the wildest confusion quickly ensued; there was a general stampede of those who had come to pray and to hear the sermon; and, in the emphatic language of Landucci, "blessed was he who could find the door."

But as the crowd surged forth into the Piazza, they found themselves exposed to worse insults and to greater danger than they had encountered within the walls of the Cathedral. Among the moral triumphs achieved by Savonarola, in the still recent days of his

[1] "La giente era a sedere alla predica, un buon popolo d'uomini e di done, e preti soprastavano a cominciare el vespro" (Landucci). Similarly Parenti, but more explicitly: "E canonici . . . sbuffavano et per alcun modo comportare non voleano che detto frate . . . predicassi, onde differivano il vespro per ordinare lo impedimento" (Ranke, *loc. cit.*). Burlamacchi charges them with having come to an agreement on the subject with the Compagnacci.

[2] "Usando parole e dicendo: 'Andatevi con Dio, piagnonacci'" (Landucci, *Diario*, p. 170).

[3] "Antonio Alamanni . . . salito alto su' gradi, forte picchiò l'assito; et voce mandò fuori alle donne, che se n'andassino, perchè non si predicava" (Parenti, *loc. cit.*).

[4] Parenti (a contemporary witness hostile to Savonarola) frankly says that, "alcuni giovani de Compagnacci trovatisi presenti, *volentieri presono l'occasione*," etc.

popularity, had been the almost entire suppression of the time-honoured but exceedingly mischievous and sometimes fatal sport of stone-throwing, in which the Florentine youth had been accustomed to indulge. But now, under the distinguished patronage of Doffo Spini and his crew, they resumed their old pastime, but with a difference, and with very serious consequences. Instead of engaging in a free fight among themselves, after the approved fashion of days gone by, they reserved their missiles for the Piagnoni, who, as they made their way towards the Duomo, or came out from thence, were pelted by the boys, and assailed by older ruffians with every kind of ribald jest, and even with blows.[1] Fra Mariano Ughi himself, who was on his way from S. Marco, accompanied by many of the laity, found himself obliged to retire before the storm;[2] and as others too fled from the Duomo towards S. Marco, the crowd of youthful stone-throwers followed them.[3] Nor must it be supposed that stones and insults were in all cases received with heroic meekness. The lads, instigated no doubt by their elders, had already made an attack upon the house of Andrea Cambini, a man who had on many occasions acted as intermediary between Valori and the convent, and whose reputation as an ardent Piagnone was second only to that of Valori himself. But the volley of missiles discharged at Cambini's house was returned with spirit by the inmates,[4] and this first open interchange of hostilities helped to render possible the disgraceful scenes which followed. A little active resistance on the part of the Frateschi was all that was needed to afford an occasion to the Compagnacci to stir up the mob to something worse than mere mischief. As pursuers

[1] "Andamo (a S. Maria del Fiore) . . . e cominciorono a tirare molti sassi e' fanciugli inverso il popolo" (Deposition of Luca della Robbia, p. ccxl.). Similarly Burlamacchi. (The depositions of all the witnesses at the subsequent trial of Savonarola are given *in extenso* by Villari, vol. ii. pp. cxlvii. *sqq.* With the exception of that of Savonarola himself, the rest are for the most part genuine autographs, and they afford valuable evidence as to many of the details of the tumult.)

[2] Filipepi, pp. 487-88. Filipepi was one of those who actually accompanied Ughi on this occasion, and therefore his testimony must be preferred to that of Burlamacchi, who brings the preacher into the Duomo.

[3] "Li amici del Frate tutti si ritirorno verso il monasterio di Sancto Marcho . . . et dreto alloro se aviorno molti fanzuli, cridando et tirendo delli sassi" (Somenzi to Sforza, 8th April; Villari, p. xcv.). This letter relates the events of the night from hour to hour, the news being written down, paragraph by paragraph, as it came in. It contains, however, as many blunders as an average modern telegram from the seat of war.

[4] Dep. of Della Robbia, *loc. cit.*

and pursued hurried along the Via del Cocomero, which leads from the Duomo to the Piazza dell' Anunziata, an inoffensive citizen ("un nobil giovane de' Pecori," says Burlamacchi), whose only crime was that he was saying his prayers as he went along, was run through with a spear, and died on the spot; and not long after the arrival of the crowd before S. Marco, another follower of Fra Girolamo, a poor tradesman, who ventured to remonstrate with the rioters, was likewise brutally murdered.[1]

Notwithstanding the evidence which these murders afford of the reckless temper of the mob, it is just possible that graver disorders might have been avoided, had not some few of the friends of Savonarola, by their impetuous rashness, only too opportunely played into the hands of their enemies. A very small number of citizens, foremost of whom was Francesco Davanzati, had in the course of the previous fortnight conveyed into the convent a little consignment of arms, offensive and defensive; and during the intervening period a watch had been set each night under fear of an attack from the Compagnacci.[2] No one can seriously blame these measures of precaution, though it would probably have been better if Fra Salvestro Maruffi and Fra Francesco de' Medici, who seem

[1] Burlamacchi, p. 145.

[2] Notice of the projected attack had been given to Fra Silvestro Maruffi by Bernardo da Cante and Bartolommeo Cavalcanti a few weeks previously. Maruffi commissioned Fra Francesco de' Medici to make some provision. Medici spoke of the matter to Davanzati, and the latter, in conjunction with Giovanni Capponi, Matteo Strozzi, and Lionello Boni, supplied a dozen or so of cuirasses, helmets, and shields, eight muskets, a barrel of powder, and some bullets. (Dep. of Nicholas, "the shoemaker," pp. ccxxxiii. *sqq.*, and of Fra Francesco de' Medici, p. ccxxxi., etc.) A couple of "bombardelle," or small cannon, are also mentioned, but were almost certainly not used. There were a few arms already in the convent, which used to be left there from day to day by Savonarola's body-guard. And on the day of the riot a few citizens brought their own weapons. Altogether about sixteen of the friars, and perhaps thirty laymen, took an active part in the defence. Fra Domenico declares that these preparations—made without his knowledge—appeared to him more ludicrous than alarming, and he insists that most of those who bore arms were of the humbler classes (genterella minuta; Dep., p. cc.). Medici says that it was not until the Saturday evening that Savonarola had some "general knowledge" of what had been done. The evidence as to who took arms, and what arms were borne by each, is so minute in detail, that the argument from silence may fairly be pressed against the supposition that the "bombardelle" were ever brought into action. They would, however, naturally serve as trophies, to be dragged about the city after the taking of the convent, as specimens of monkish munitions of war ("Ecco l'arme, che i frati avevano in convento!" Burlamacchi, p. 154).

to have been chiefly responsible for them, had first sought and followed the advice of their superior. Savonarola, it may safely be assumed, would either have dissuaded them altogether — as Valori himself and his friend Cambini actually did dissuade them —from taking any such step, or would at least have strictly cautioned them that no arms must be used in or about the convent except for the purpose of necessary self-defence.[1] At any rate, the possession of these arms now gave occasion for an act of very serious imprudence, just such an act as the Compagnacci would have wished to provoke. The consentient testimony of several witnesses makes it clear that the first attack on the convent was made by a rabble largely consisting of boys and youths, who with a shower of stones drove back the congregation as they were issuing from S. Marco after Vespers.[2] No doubt there were many in the crowd who carried arms, and the cries of the attacking party were menacing enough. One Paolo, a wax-chandler, says in his evidence that, when he had retreated before the stones: "Dipoi vene la furia, e quali non vidi mai; *ma udì la ghrida grande*, e che volevano amazzare tutti quegli che erano in Sa Marcho."[3] No wonder that there was a general rush to the "squola" (*sic*), the room in which the arms were stored, and a general donning of cuirasses and helmets, and a snatching up of weapons,[4] in which warlike preparations a very small number of the friars (out of a community of 250) took part.[5] Nor, so far as we can see,

[1] Villari (ii. 163) gives no authority for the statement that Valori spoke in the sense indicated above. But Cambini, his most intimate friend, declares that he himself, when spoken to on the subject, had advised, "che per niente lo facesino, chè n'arebono carico, et sarebono cagione di muovere scandalo" (Dep., p. cclxxx).

[2] "E tutto il popolo e' fanciulli corrono co' sassi; intanto che molti uomini e donne ch' erano in S. Marco non potevano uscire fuori pe' sassi. E io mi trovai; e se non fussi che del chiostro uscì e andane in verso la Porta di San Gallo, rimanevo forse morto" (Landucci, p. 170). "E detto il Vespro venne uno rimore (*sic*) . . . E in su questo . . . giunse gente in sulla piaza; che chredo io, alle bocie, fusino *più charzonotti che uomini*" (Dep. of Lionello Boni, p. ccxliv.). Similarly Alessandro Pucci (Dep., p. cclxxiv): "Quando da principio i fanciulli cominciorono a trarre saxi a S. Marco." Parenti speaks even of the fighting on occasion of the second attack (of which presently) as a "leggiera scaramuccia": and during the first skirmish Luca della Robbia, who had gone "for a drink" with some companions, was afterwards able to return unhurt to S. Marco (Dep., p. ccxl). Several others went home to fetch their arms, and returned without serious molestation.

[3] Dep. of Paolo, p. ccxxxvi.

[4] Dep. of Girolamo Gini, pp. ccl., cclii.

[5] Dep. of Nicholas, the shoemaker, p. ccxxxiv.

can they reasonably be blamed for this. But as a mere matter of prudence it would have been well if their lay defenders had confined their tactics to securing the doors, and placing guards at each. The convent walls, as Davanzati did not fail to remind them, were a better protection than any "targone," or "rotella," or "corazza" which they might chance to have picked up.[1] Besides which it was of the very utmost importance to do nothing which could serve to provoke the crowd to further outrages. Against the resistance of dead walls the waves of the tempest might after all have beaten themselves into comparative calm. Unfortunately, in the ardour of their zeal for the defence of the convent, and under the excitement produced by the *ghrida grande* of the mob outside, some fifteen or twenty of them, among whom was one Francesco del Pugliese, "panting like a bull," must needs issue forth into the Piazza and exchange shots, or engage in a hand-to-hand combat with their assailants.[2] It was in vain that Fra Domenico went through the convent imploring both laymen and friars to lay down their arms;[3] in vain that Baldo Inghirlami endeavoured to dissuade them from their ill-judged sortie, which could only issue in mischief to the convent.[4]

For about an hour the fighting went on in the square.[5] It was pro-

[1] "Et io gli chonfortai a tornare drento, perchè eglino stavano meglio in chesa che fuora, et piu sichuri stavano" (Dep. of Davanzati, p. ccxlvii).

[2] Domenico (Dep., p. cci) says that his attention was attracted by hearing shots, which, as he implies, were partly at least fired by the defenders. Not more than five or six of the Frateschi, however, seem to have used firearms (Dep. of Nicholas, *loc. cit.*). Alessandro Pucci relates that he went out and threw some stones, but soon returned. The notary adds: "*Item* (vi vide) Francesco del Pugliese in mantello et cappuccio, che dice soffiava come uno thoro" (p. cclxxiv). Guicciardini says: "Cominciorono con sassi e colle arme a difenderlo (*i.e.* the convent) benchè non fussi stretto" (p. 171).

[3] Dep., p. ccii.

[4] "Operai che ritornassino drento a posare l'arme; dicendo loro che e' facevano male, e davano carico a S. Marcho, e che le cose di Dio non si difendevano coll' arme" (Inghirlami, Dep., p. cclxxi). Yet Nicholas declares that it was Davanzati and Inghirlami who organised the defence (comandavono et ordinavano le factioni, p. ccxxxiv), and Villari adopts this statement. But even eye-witnesses don't see everything, and they are often apt to fancy that they see more than is to be seen. In fact Baldo, like Valori, was glad to get away as soon as possible (p. cclxxi).

[5] Somenzi, *loc. cit.* One can picture this cynical diplomatist sitting in his chamber, greedily absorbing all the gossip that reached him, and filling his letter to Sforza with the wildest rumours. But he marks time satisfactorily, and his letter helps the student to unravel the thread of the succession of events from the tangled maze of the more truthful but sometimes rather confused depositions.

bably of a somewhat desultory character, yet sufficiently vigorous to keep up the excitement, until the news of more stirring incidents going forward elsewhere drew off a considerable portion of the crowd to another quarter of the city. Another cause, however, may possibly have had something to do with the comparative quiet which now for some time ensued in the immediate neighbourhood of S. Marco. The Signory seems to have spent the afternoon and evening in consultation at the Palazzo, and while it is to be regretted that the records of their proceedings on this eventful night are so exceedingly meagre, we at least have some authentic documents which throw light on their action, and perhaps on their motives. As soon as the riot broke out, they passed a resolution calling upon all unauthorised citizens to lay down their arms, and condemning Savonarola to banishment from the territories of the Republic, a sentence with which he was to comply within twelve hours.[1] How far the orders of the Signory were communicated to the mob it is impossible to say; but it seems unreasonable to suppose that no attempt was made to publish the resolution which had just been passed. And if it was made known, this might partly account for the temporary withdrawal of the rioters. At any rate, a messenger was despatched to S. Marco, to communicate to the defenders of the convent, and to Savonarola himself, the orders of the Signory. It was probably at this time that Fra Girolamo expressed his determination of going forth, with no other protection than his crucifix, saying, in the words of Jonas: "Propter me orta est hæc tempestas—It is on my account that this storm has arisen"; and it was only the united remonstrances of his own community and of his lay friends which dissuaded him from putting his purpose into execution.[2] It was also probably at this time that Baldo Inghirlami, and probably several others, took the opportunity of making their way home.[3] Valori had already

[1] The terms of the resolution (from the official record) are given by Villari, p. xciv. Somenzi (*loc. cit.*) declares that the Signory authorised all who chose to take up arms against S. Marco! His informants evidently brought him the kind of news which would, they knew, be welcome.

[2] Burlamacchi, p. 145, whose account is confirmed by the depositions of Fra Salvestro and of Alessandro Pucci (pp. ccxxvi, cclxxiv).

[3] Dep., p. cclxxi. He speaks of having gone home with an escort (con un mazziere e 3 tavolaccini), and with some companions, by way of the garden gate. There must, therefore, have been some officials present. There was a second decree of the Signory commanding all laymen then within the convent walls to leave it within an hour. Nardi speaks as if this decree had followed immediately on the first, or as if both had been communicated at the

left the convent, having made his escape by way of the garden wall.[1]

What may have been Valori's motive in thus, as it might seem, abandoning his friends, it is not easy to determine. But the simplest explanation seems to be that he dreaded an attack upon his own house, and that he went for the purpose of protecting it if possible against the violence of the rioters. Disapproving as he did the measures which had been taken for the armed defence of the convent, he may well have thought that his presence there was more likely to injure than to help the inmates; and we may at least feel sure that his departure was no act of betrayal or of cowardice. The event showed that his fears for his own house were not groundless.[2]

Whatever the real dispositions of a majority of the Signory may have been, and whether or no some of them were privy to the act, the Compagnacci, by a bold stroke, now secured for themselves complete and effective control of the rioters for their own bad ends. Della Vecchia, the captain of the palace guard, who had some hundreds of men under his command, was thought to be friendly to Savonarola. Now the Compagnacci had secured the adherence of at least two of the Gonfalonieri of the city companies. One of them, who is not named, the standard-bearer of the "Vipera," with a numerous armed following, took possession of the Piazza della Signoria, guarding all the approaches (as della Vecchia had done the day before for a better purpose); while Giovanni Manetti, also a Gonfaloniere, who rode in at the head of another troop, called della Vecchia to his side as if to speak to him, forcibly pulled him

same time. But none of the witnesses made any reference to it; and it seems clear from the depositions, that previously to the negotiations for the final surrender, only one messenger had arrived from the Signory, and that he had only required the defenders to lay down their arms (pp. ccii, ccxliv, cclxxiv, cclxxxv). The third and fourth of the "bandi," published by Villari (pp. xciv., xcv.) were issued, we believe, subsequently to the arrest of Fra Girolamo.

[1] Nardi, p. 123.

[2] Parenti very explicitly declares that Savonarola himself advised Valori to go and defend his own house: "Che ad armare s'andassino, et con i loro seguaci ragunatisi a casa del Valori si difendessino, et la parte adversa superare s'ingegnassino; altrimenti ajutare non li poteva che colle orazioni" (Ranke, p. 316, and again, p. 317). But this is obviously mere hearsay, probably having no better foundation than that Valori proposed to go home to look to the defence of his own house, and that Savonarola did not seek to detain him. Pitti also says (p. 53) that Valori and Ridolfi, "erano confortati d'andare ad armarsi, e col seguito loro, defenderlo," *i.e.* to defend S. Marco. But Pitti, too, is a hostile witness.

from his horse, and then and there carried him off to the Bargello, where he gave him into custody.[1] Then, raising the cry "Popolo! Popolo!" he called off his own followers, together with the rabble of the populace, to the congenial task of sacking the house of Valori.[2] This champion of the Frateschi reached his home only in time to find it already besieged by an infuriated mob; and it was his cruel fate to see his own wife, who came to the window to remonstrate with the attacking party, struck dead by a bolt from a cross-bow.[3] Whatever efforts he may have been able to make to defend his home only served still more to enrage the assailants, who effected an entrance and proceeded to loot the house, while Valori only saved himself for the moment by hiding.[4] A little later a messenger from the Signory came to summon him to the palace. He obeyed the summons, but on his way was assassinated by Vincenzo Ridolfi and Simone Tornabuoni; an act of private vengeance for the prominent part which he had taken in procuring the condemnation and prompt execution of Niccolò Ridolfi and Lorenzo Tornabuoni, with the other Medicean conspirators, in the previous August.[5]

[1] This incident, which seems to have been entirely overlooked by Villari, rests on what seems to be irrefragable testimony. Parenti praises Manetti for his "buonissima opera" on the occasion; and Cerretani tells the story in detail. He says: "In questo tempo ciascuno de' Compagnacci sotto il Gonfalioniere della Vipera giunsero in Piazza e presero le bocche; dell' altra banda giunsero Giov. di Giannozzo Manetti con bella compagnia, e visto Giovanni della Vecchia armato in Piazza con la sua compagnia, lo chiamò, e così a cavallo accostandosi lo prese per il gorzaretto, e dato di piè al cavallo, lo condusse al Bargello, dove lo fece serrare" (Ranke, p. 316). Villari brings della Vecchia to S. Marco later in the night, and will have it that he threatened to bombard the convent (p. 168).

[2] "Et innanzi che fussi ore 22 (4 P.M.) venne in Piazza qualche Gonfalone armati, gridando *popolo*, ch' erano quasi tutti Compagnacci, e commiciorono a dire e gridare: *A casa Francesco Valori, a sacco*," etc. (Landucci). Similarly Parenti (Ranke, p. 317).

[3] Guicciardini, p. 171; Nardi, p. 123; Pitti, p. 53; Parenti, *loc. cit.*, etc.

[4] "Voltasi . . . la furia e la moltitudine a casa F. Valori, *e combattendola perchè era difesa da quegli di casa*," etc. (Guicciardini, p. 171). Again: "Fu trovato Francesco in una soffitta"; and Parenti says: "Lui nascoso ogni cosa sentì" (Ranke, p. 317).

[5] Guicciardini (p. 172) gives the names of the assassins, adding that Jacopo Pitti also plunged his sword, or dagger, into him, but after he was already dead. "Così colla morte della privata persona di lui fu vendicata l'ingiuria pubblica. . . . Cosa di pessimo e tirannico esempio" (Nardi, i. 123). Guicciardini and Pitti both observe that no one was ever brought to account for this murder.

From Valori's house the mob proceeded, under the guidance of its patrician leaders, to loot that of Andrea Cambini, and the houses of Pagolantonio Soderini and of G. B. Ridolfi narrowly escaped the same fate. They were saved, however, through the intercession of influential friends, and perhaps, as Guicciardini declares, through the action of the Signory; and the fury of the mob wreaked itself on the humbler dwellings of certain less distinguished supporters of Fra Girolamo.[1]

These exciting occupations had drawn off, as has been said, a considerable portion of the crowd which had been gathered in the Piazza of S. Marco, and the inmates of the convent had a respite of perhaps a couple of hours. But after this interval the rioters returned to the attack with a more determined rage, and the gathering darkness favoured the designs of the real authors of these outrages. It seems probable that the defenders of the convent once more played into the hands of their enemies by attempting to cope with them by active hostilities. Moreover—a sure way to increase the excitement and confusion—the great bell of the convent was tolled by way of a summons to the friends of S. Marco.[2] Jacopo de' Nerli, a prominent leader of the Compagnacci, lost an eye in the *mêlée;* an incident which would no doubt be turned to the best account by his friends, as an occasion for still further inflaming the

Somenzi dates the event at 7 P.M. Guicciardini feelingly laments that he should have been thus suddenly cut off without having time to receive the last rites of the Church. Burlamacchi, however, says that he had that morning received the Holy Communion.

[1] "Ma vi concorsono molti uomini da bene, appresso a chi non era in odio Paolantonio (Soderini) come Francesco (Valori), e la Signoria vi mandò a riparare, in forma che si raffrenò quello impeto" (Guicciardini, p. 173). Somenzi (*loc. cit.*) speaks of three other houses. Burlamacchi says that Pecori's house was sacked. Nardi (p. 124) says: "E un altra d'uno artefice divoto," etc. Landucci tells us that the poor man had been throwing tiles on the mob from the window of his house.

[2] "Et in quest hora, che sono le 24 (*i.e.* 6 P.M.), tucto il popolo armato è andato a S. Marcho, per comandamento della Signoria (!), a dare la battaglia a quello monasterio, per pigliare Frate H., perchè la Signoria lo vuole omnino in le manie, o vivo o morto. Quello che vi sono dentro fano grande diffesa et sonano le campane a martello," etc. (Somenzi, *loc. cit.*, p. xcvii). Several of the authorities mention the tolling of the bell; but it would not be safe to place implicit reliance on Somenzi's statements (twice afterwards repeated, at 7 and 9 P.M.) about the "grande diffesa," even though they seem to have the support of Guicciardini (p. 173). It is not certain that active hostilities were resumed, or the bell rung, until the rioters actually broke in.

angry passions of the besiegers.[1] Once more, and again to no purpose, Fra Domenico used his best endeavours to stop the fighting, and implored those who were ringing the bell to cease from doing so.[2] It was now that a definite attempt was made to force an entrance into the church and convent by setting fire to the doors; and piles of inflammable material were heaped against them and set alight. When this was done Savonarola saw that the only course to be taken was to await with patience whatever fate might be in store for himself and for his brethren and friends. Betaking himself to that special form of supplication which had been his favourite resource on all critical occasions, he put himself at the head of a procession which made the detour of the cloisters, chanting the Litanies and other invocations. He thus led his brethren and followers to the choir of the church, where he commanded every one to lay down his arms.[3] From this time onwards the majority of them remained kneeling through the long hours in ceaseless prayer, in the momentary expectation of death; and for the time at least no further attempt at active resistance was made.[4] As Fra Benedetto has it in his *Cedrus Libani*:—

"E' figli del Profeta eran cantando
Le Litanie avanti al Sacramento,
Di punto in punto il martirio aspettando."

Domenico declares his conviction that Fra Girolamo's one thought was to prepare himself and his brethren for death. For six hours continuously, he says, they prayed, "expecting every moment to be cut to pieces": and if any one ventured to look round, or failed to make the responses to the Litanies, there was always some one to admonish

[1] "Dipoi ritornando la moltitudine a S. Marco, dove si faceva difesa assai gagliarda, fu, credo con una balestra, cavato lo occhio a Jacopo de' Nerli, che era in quello tumulto capo contro al frate," etc. (Guicciardini, p. 173). Somenzi says, however, in a letter written some days later, that Nerli was wounded "più presto forse da li suoy (*sic*) che da quelli de dentro, per essere la brigata andata cum poco ordine, et esserli la piu parte persone male apte ad arme" (Somenzi to Sforza, 12th April; Villari, p. cii.). Burlamacchi says it was one of the friars, who, after the rioters had broken in, put out Nerli's eye with his cross.

[2] Dep., p. ccii.

[3] Burlamacchi, pp. 145-46. It appears from Burlamacchi's account that the Blessed Sacrament was reserved not in the church but in the sacristy. He says that, after the procession: "Entrò poi in sagrestia, et di nuovo paratosi, prese il Tabernacolo (? the ciborium) con il Sacramento, et posatolo sopra l'Altar maggiore, insieme con tutti i suoi figli si pose in oratione," etc.

[4] *Cedrus Libani*, in *A. S. I.*, Append. 23, p. 83.

him with the words, "Orate fratres." Della Robbia and Gini in their depositions bear witness to this continued prospect of death. To some youths who were frightened, Alessandro Pucci said: "We shall sup with God."[1] In all the career of Savonarola this is perhaps the noblest scene, a worthy theme for a great historical painting.

Soon, however, some of the assailants contrived, by scaling the walls, to effect an entrance into the cloister, and by this means reached the door leading from the sacristy into the choir. On their appearance there, three of the friars, armed with no weapons more formidable than a crucifix and candles, rushed to meet them, crying, "Viva Cristo!" followed by a few of the laity.[2] The invading party, seized for the moment with a sudden panic, turned and fled, and a prolonged but somewhat desultory skirmish now ensued within the convent walls. In this engagement the defenders gained the upper hand, and a number of the invaders, who had taken refuge in the cells, found themselves prisoners. Needless to say, they were dismissed unhurt, with a caution and a blessing.[3]

But the attack upon the principal doors still went forward, and Fra Benedetto distinguished himself by showering bricks and tiles from the roof on the heads of the assailants, until, somewhat later in the course of the night, he was commanded by Savonarola to desist. It is Benedetto himself who relates the incident:[4]—

"Ed io con alcun' altri, l'alta scorza
Del tetto della chiesa gittavamo,
Che dell' uscirne a' nemici fu forza.
Lor arme e scuti a furia rompavamo,
Che lapide paria ciel piovessi:
Così lor forze indrieto tenavamo."

Towards midnight, the flames opened a way into the church from the square outside, and then it was that the sharpest fighting took place. The invaders fired on those within; and on the other

[1] Dep., pp. cciii, ccxlii, ccl, cclii, cclxxiv.

[2] "E dipoi usei fuora del choro tre frati cho' torchi e cholle chroci in mano, gridando: viva christo. . . . E dipoi tutti si fuggirono," etc. (Dep. of della Robbia, pp. ccxli-xlii). This is confirmed by Gini's evidence, and by Fra Benedetto, *Cedrus Libani* (in *A.S.I.*, Append. n. 23), p. 84.

[3] It is abundantly clear from the evidence given by Gini and della Robbia that the defenders used their sudden victory with the utmost clemency. They struck their enemies, by preference, with the flat of their swords or halberds, and some were disarmed and taken prisoners. "Sanno che noi faciavamo poi loro onore, e non faciavamo loro dispiacere" (della Robbia, Dep., p. ccxlii).

[4] *Cedrus Libani*, p. 85.

side a certain young German, by name Heinrich, with one companion, took up their position by the lectern, and used their muskets freely. Afterwards, retreating behind the altar, they continued from that vantage-ground their gallant but apparently not very fatal fusillade.[1]

As soon as the door had been forced, Fra Girolamo, grieved beyond measure at the riot and bloodshed wherewith the church was being desecrated, and fearing, not for his own life, but lest the Blessed Sacrament should be exposed to outrage, took the ciborium from the altar, and bade his brethren accompany him to the "libreria greca," which lay beyond the dormitory. Once again a procession was formed, and once again the Litanies were solemnly chanted in the midst of all the surrounding uproar.[2] On the way, Fra Girolamo met Fra Benedetto, intent on his work of defending the convent. Kindly but firmly he commanded him to lay down his arms, and from that moment all idea of holding out against the invaders appears to have been given up.[3] The library was now for the time being used as a chapel, and the long and tedious vigil was there resumed.

During these proceedings two touching incidents occurred, which have been recorded by eye-witnesses, and which deserve mention here. Before Fra Girolamo and his brethren had left the choir, a young man, one Ridolfo Panciatichi, mortally wounded in the fracas, was brought in, and laid on the steps of the altar, where he received the Viaticum from the hands of Fra Domenico, and expired with a favourite text of his master's on his lips: "Ecce quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare fratres in unum."[4] And after the community had assembled in the "Greek library," Girolamo Gini, a poor tradesman of Florence, who had been promised that he should be admitted into the Order, being now wounded, and fearing that death was at hand, begged and received the habit.[5]

[1] Dep. of Nicholas, della Robbia, Gini, and Mei; Burlamacchi, p. 149.

[2] Nardi, p. 124; Burlamacchi, p. 150; Dep. of Domenico, p. ccii.

[3] Mi vidde el santo che era all' orazione
E mi riprese con parlare umano.
Disse: Figliolo, ascolta il mio sermone,
Prendi la croce, e non l'arme e'l coltello:
Di far così non è mia 'ntenzione.
Allor cessò ciascun di far ripari.—(*Cedrus Libani*, p. 85.)

[4] Dep. of G. Gini, p. ccli, and of B. Mei, p. cclxxxiv; Burlamacchi, p. 148.

[5] Dep. of Gini, pp. ccli, ccliii.

A second messenger had, in the meanwhile, arrived from the Signory, with peremptory orders that Fra Girolamo, together with Fra Domenico and Fra Salvestro Maruffi should at once proceed to the palace. Fra Girolamo, for his part, was only too willing to go; but his brethren, suspecting the authenticity of the mandate, insisted that the man should bring a written attestation of the formal vote by which this course had been determined on. While Fra Girolamo awaited his return, he made a touching address to his brethren and friends, of which Fra Benedetto, in his *Cedrus Libani*, gives the substance.

"My sons," he said, "in presence of God, in presence of the consecrated Host, and in the midst of our enemies, I reaffirm the teaching which I have delivered to you. What I have said I have received from God, and God in heaven is my witness that I speak the truth. I did not know that the whole city would so soon turn against me; but God's will be done. My last advice to you is this: let faith, patience, and prayer be your arms. Sorrowing and grieving I leave you, to go into the power of my enemies. I do not know whether they will take my life, but I am certain that, being dead, I can help you in heaven more than I was able to do in my lifetime on earth. Be comforted, embrace the cross, wherein you will find the harbour of salvation."[1]

Midnight being now passed, Fra Girolamo made his confession to Domenico, and received the holy Communion at his hands, a fitting preparation, assuredly, for the fate which he foresaw.

The Compagnacci in force now appeared on the scene, and four of them were admitted to a parley in the convent. They brought, or at least professed to show, the official report of the decree. Benedetto asserts that Fra Malatesta, the very man who had declared his willingness to undergo the ordeal on behalf of Savonarola, played the part of a traitor, and tendered his advice to the enemy. However this may be, Savonarola and Fra Domenico determined to obey the summons, notwithstanding the entreaties of his friends that he would seek safety in flight. He had indeed, at first, shown some disposition to follow this advice, but when Malatesta asked him whether it was not the duty of the shepherd to give his life for his sheep, he put aside all hesitation. Embracing his brethren, and among them Malatesta first of all, he surrendered himself to the messengers who at this moment returned from the

[1] *Cedrus Libani*, c. ix.

Signory bringing the written order. Domenico surrendered with his master, but Salvestro was nowhere to be found, nor can he be severely blamed if, under the circumstances, he sought to escape the hands of justice—such justice as was likely to be meted out to him. He was arrested on the following morning. As Savonarola was led away, he turned to his brethren and bade them not to lose faith. The work of the Lord, he said, would go forward, and his death would but hasten it.

As Fra Girolamo and his faithful companion were led to the palace, they were loaded with every kind of brutal insult, and it was with reason that his followers likened his painful journey through the streets of Florence to the *Via dolorosa* of our Lord Himself. Whatever faults or mistakes Fra Girolamo may have committed, he was at any rate the best friend whom the miscreants that now insulted him had ever had. And whatever may have been the real or ostensible grounds for his final condemnation, it was not on these grounds that he was now persecuted by the mob and by their leaders, but principally because he had fearlessly rebuked vice, and had held in check for so long a period those evil passions which were now let loose against him in all their fury.

Somenzi relates, with a satisfaction which is altogether in keeping with his odious character, how he himself saw the two friars arrive at the Palazzo, and there put in chains.

CHAPTER XXI

THE TRIAL

THE story of the trial, the condemnation, and the execution of Fra Girolamo Savonarola and his two companions, Fra Domenico Buonvicino da Pescia and Fra Salvestro Maruffi, fills one of the dark pages of ecclesiastical history. It is one which the historical student might well be glad to pass over unread; one which the biographer of Fra Girolamo would naturally prefer to leave unwritten, were it not that the interests of truth call for completeness in regard of this no less than of other scenes in the drama of the Friar's stormy life. Partly, however, for the sake of clearness, and partly for the sake of those readers who may not care to enter into the minutiæ of the subject, we propose, first of all, to set forth in general terms our own conclusions and reflections on this historic trial, and then briefly to review the course of events during the six weeks over which the proceedings extended, reserving the details of the evidence, and a fuller summing-up of the case, for subsequent chapters.

It is easy to understand how a Protestant, of the good old school which regards the Inquisition and all its works as the invention of the Evil One, should regard the whole process which ended in the condemnation and execution of Savonarola as a piece of unmitigated wickedness. But a Catholic, who has at heart the honour of the Church even in the dark days of Alexander VI., and in particular the honour of the illustrious Order of which Savonarola was so distinguished a member, may well hesitate before subscribing to such a view. He may well hesitate before venturing to pronounce that Gioacchino Torriano, the Master General of the Friars Preachers, and Fra Francesco Salviati, the Prior of the reformed convent of S. Marco, and Fra Giovanni Sinibaldi, the Master of Novices, and Fra Cosimo Tornabuoni, and Fra Malatesta Sacramoro, and Fra Giorgiantonio

Vespucci, and Fra Pietropaolo da Urbino, religious of the same convent (to say nothing of the other ecclesiastics concerned), were, in their several degrees all accessory to the guilt of murder.[1] In the interests of what may perhaps be called rational historical psychology it would seem that some explanation must be discoverable which, while saving Fra Girolamo from the imputation of anything worse than a mistake, or series of mistakes (probably not altogether inculpable), may yet exonerate his judges, or at least some of them, from the far graver accusations which in their zeal for the vindication of Savonarola some modern writers have been only too ready to lay to their charge.

Let us begin by laying down, as the basis of what we have to say, three propositions which will probably be accepted on all hands.

No one supposes that Savonarola was guilty, in conscience, of any crime which by reason of its author's moral culpability deserved the punishment of death.

No one nowadays would wish to uphold the objective reasonableness of the obsolete and barbaric system of extracting evidence by means of torture.

No one doubts that many of Savonarola's enemies were actuated by the basest of motives, or that many illegalities were committed in the course of the trial (especially at its outset), or that the report of Fra Girolamo's examination, as drawn up by the notary, Ser Ceccone, had been falsified by omissions, interpolations, and alterations.

And yet there can be no doubt that in his own time, and subsequently, there were good men who, judging in accordance with the principles of civil and ecclesiastical jurisprudence which were then current, believed that Savonarola was justly condemned. Nor can this judgment, as it would seem, be set down simply to ignorance of the facts of the case. For the main facts were as well known then as now; and the manipulation by Ser Ceccone of the evidence given at the trial does not, after all, affect such knowledge as men possessed independently of the documents pertaining to the process. What, then, is the explanation?

In the first place, we would recall to the reader's mind that more

[1] Torriano was one of the papal commissaries deputed to try Fra Girolamo. The other Dominican Fathers and Brothers whom we have named countersigned the confession of Savonarola (Villari, ii. Doc. xxvi.). If it be alleged that their signatures were obtained by the juggling substitution of one document for another, it must be remembered that they had plenty of time in which to raise a protest.

than once, in his sermons, Fra Girolamo had urged the magistracy of Florence to put into execution in all its severity the somewhat draconian code of criminal justice which was still theoretically in force, though in practice it had begun to undergo some mitigation under the humanising influence of the Renaissance. That blasphemy should be punished by the piercing of the tongue with a red-hot iron, that unnatural vice should be visited with the penalty of death by burning, that for such or such an offence "a few turns of the rope" would be a fitting retribution; these were opinions which Fra Girolamo had not hesitated to express in the chief pulpits of Florence, and to which he had given the sanction of his great authority. In judging, then, of the actions of those concerned in his trial, while it is right to wish that a milder system of dealing with accused persons had then prevailed, it is also necessary to bear in mind that the severer methods of mediæval justice had in many respects at least his own full approval.

But it will be indignantly replied that his words concerned criminals, that he was no criminal, and that there is no parity between the punishment, however severe, of the guilty and the doing to death of an innocent man, and more especially of one who had been, in so unique a degree, a benefactor to his fellow-citizens. Yet it is important to bear in mind that it was not merely blasphemers and libertines upon whom Fra Girolamo had invoked the rigours of the criminal law. We have already given a specimen in Chapter IX. of the terms in which, with all the vigour of his eloquence, he had urged the Signory to show no mercy to those who should become involved in plots for the restoration of Piero de' Medici. And how faithfully, and with what panic haste, this advice had been carried out — under the predominating influence of his friend Valori—in the case of Bernardo del Nero, Lorenzo Tornabuoni, and the rest, the reader is aware. Now the restoration of Piero de' Medici to Florence would probably have been a grievous disaster. Whether a second invasion of Italy by Charles VIII., which Savonarola had done his best to invite, would have been a lesser evil, is a point which is open to dispute. But this at least may be said, that an intrigue for either purpose was equally unconstitutional. Moreover, it may fairly be asked whether the mischief likely to result from the recall of Piero would have been comparable to the evils of a schism in the Church; and yet Savonarola had undoubtedly plotted to bring about a state of

things which could hardly have issued otherwise than in a schism.[1] It was distinctly a part of his scheme for the reformation of the Church that a Council should be called, whose first business, if he had his way, would be to depose Alexander VI., or rather to declare him to be no true Pope. Of the grounds on which Fra Girolamo maintained (though he had not as yet openly said so in public) that Alexander's tenure of the Apostolic See was radically invalid, we shall speak more at large in the concluding chapter of this work. Meanwhile we would point out that while, on the one hand, Savonarola might deem himself bound in conscience to use his utmost endeavours to secure the deposition of Borgia, on the other hand, those who believed him to be rightful Pope were bound to defend him, and to defend the Church from what could not but appear to them a very grave danger.[2] And, indeed, that Savonarola's attempt never got beyond the utterance of mysterious threats and the drafting of a few letters is a thing for which we, living four centuries later, have abundant reason to be thankful to an over-ruling Providence.[3] But the attempt was made, and made in a very determined if ineffectual manner; and if it be said that the motives of him who made the attempt were high and noble, it can only be answered that in matters which affect the substantial welfare of the body-politic, whether civil or ecclesiastical, the law cannot take account of motives, unless it be by way of the mitigation of the sentence of condemnation which in such a case must needs be pronounced.

It is very easy and very obvious to say, as Agnolo Nicolini is said to have urged at the time, that all the needful ends of justice could

[1] This is the deliberate opinion of Pastor, who in such a matter, will presumably be esteemed a competent judge (*History*, vi. 51).

[2] "The greatest danger seemed to lie in Savonarola's friendship (?) with the French King, Charles VIII., who had already, on 7th January 1497, obtained from the Sorbonne a pronouncement in favour of his plans for calling a Council. Alexander had got to know of these intrigues. . . . He now thought that he had good reason to fear that Savonarola's mysterious threats, such as 'Some day I will turn the key,' or 'I will cry, Lazarus, come forth,' were more than mere empty words" (Pastor, vi. 36). "Even a Pope has some rights of self-defence, and had Alexander overlooked the contumacy of the Friar, the continuance of the Papacy [or rather of his tenure of the Papacy] would have been impossible" (Armstrong in *English Historical Review*, iv. 455, *apud* Pastor, *loc. cit.*).

[3] Complete success—that is to say, success without a concomitant schism—might indeed have been a blessing. But this, we believe, was practically out of the question. Complete failure was better than a half-measure of success attended by the evils of a schism.

have been secured by the perpetual imprisonment of the Friar. To this, however, it was answered that, in view of the frequent changes of government at Florence, any one of which changes might have resulted in his liberation, a sentence of imprisonment was altogether inadequate to the necessities of the case; and that the motives which on merely personal grounds would have suggested a mitigation of the extreme penalty which he had legally incurred, must yield to the supreme consideration of the public welfare.[1] This, and not the desire to gloat over his death, was, we believe, the real reason why Alexander so persistently urged that Savonarola should be sent for trial to Rome.

It has been said that if Fra Girolamo had succeeded; if the wished-for Council had been called, and had issued in the deposition or abdication of Alexander, the author of this ecclesiastical revolution would have been hailed as a saviour of society, and, in a sense, of the Church itself. That he would have been so regarded by many is likely enough. But, after all, such a hypothesis is hardly sufficient for the complete vindication of Fra Girolamo. The objective morality of an act must be determined by other considerations than that of its actual or hypothetically possible success or failure. Nor, in considering the justice or injustice of the sentence passed upon him, is it altogether to the purpose to quote the hackneyed lines:—

> Treason doth never prosper, what's the reason?
> Why, if it prosper, none dare call it treason.

For it does not follow that, because the epigram embodies a truth, therefore unsuccessful treason must not be punished.

Once more, we are very far indeed from saying that the execution of Fra Girolamo was a desirable thing in itself, or that he was morally guilty of a grave crime. Still less do we wish to condone the actions of some of those who were most actively concerned in bringing about his death. But we do say that, on Savonarola's own principles, which we hold to have been unduly severe, the Signory and the papal commissaries would have been false to their duty if they had not applied to him that strict measure of retributive justice which he had himself repeatedly, and with the utmost insistence, declared to be the due of those who should plot against the common weal.

[1] Burlamacchi, p. 160; Villari, ii. 234.

As to the main facts there was, we repeat, no room for doubt. Fra Girolamo had not merely arrived in his own mind at the conclusion that Alexander was no true Pope; his heart was set upon seeing that conviction realised in outward act; he had publicly threatened to "turn the key" which was to open the flood-gates of revolt—not, indeed, against the Church as such, but against the actual visible head of the Church, the reigning Pontiff; and he had taken the first steps towards putting these threats into execution. The scandalous life of Alexander only made the threats and the attempt—such as it was—more dangerous. Technically, at least, Fra Girolamo was more guilty than Bernardo del Nero, who had only failed to reveal a plot hatched by others, of which to his own great displeasure he had become cognisant. Yet Savonarola had not moved a finger to save Bernardo the torture of "the rope," or from a cruel death, or even to secure for him and his companions the right or privilege of an appeal to the Consiglio Grande. A like death for a crime analogous in the eye of the law to that of Bernardo he was now to endure.

What gives to Savonarola's end that element of heroism which is lacking in the death of hundreds of other victims of prosecutions for treason, is the grandeur of his ultimate purpose, the willingness of the sacrifice which—in intention at least—he freely offered for its fulfilment, the firmness of his unshaken confidence in God alone, and lastly, the record of a blameless life, spent in the self-denying service of his Creator and Redeemer and of his fellow-men, which lay behind.

Ser Francesco di Ser Barone, more commonly known as Ser Ceccone, the shameless falsifier of the deposition or confession of Fra Girolamo, has received at the hands of posterity his due meed of scorn and loathing. But, apart from the moral turpitude of his act, he has done a supreme disservice to history by confusing the issues by which—so far as judgment is allowable and desirable—Savonarola must be judged. Crimes like that of Ser Ceccone are, we would fain believe, somewhat exceptional. And at any rate before we include any considerable number of his fellow-citizens, or of other persons engaged in the trial, in the same condemnation which must needs be passed upon himself, it would be needful that we should be quite sure how far they were cognisant of his falsification of the evidence; and how far they condemned Fra Girolamo on the score of what he had never really confessed, and how far on the ground of actions which he unquestionably admitted, and which

were in fact notorious antecedently to the employment of rope and pulley, or of the mendacious notary.

The actual course of events in connection with the trial was as follows. The arrest of Fra Girolamo took place, as has been said, in the early hours of the morning of 9th April 1498, which was the Monday in Holy Week.[1] Fra Domenico was taken together with his superior, and Fra Salvestro, who had succeeded in concealing himself for a while, was discovered and hurried off to prison a few hours later. Nineteen others were likewise placed under arrest, either on the same day, or in the course of the next fortnight; and all were examined, with a view to establishing either their own guilt, or that of the three chief prisoners.[2] Among these nineteen were three or four of the community of S. Marco; the remainder were laymen of various ranks and conditions, from persons of some distinction, like Domenico Mazzinghi, Baldo Inghirlami, and Andrea Cambini, down to "Nicholas, the shoemaker," "Paul, the wax-chandler," and "Thomas, the beadle."[3]

A debate was forthwith held in the Consiglio de' Richiesti as to whether Fra Girolamo and his two companions should be there and then tried at Florence, or whether they should be sent to Rome in case the Pope should demand this. The question was also put as to what was to be done with reference to the existing Boards of the Ten and the Eight, whose members, it was feared, might use their influence in favour of the prisoners. The conclusion was that a commission should be appointed to hold a secret examination of the three friars, with full power to use such means as they might deem expedient ("quolibet remedio opportuno," an euphemism for "torture"); and, moreover, that a fresh election of the Ten and the Eight should be immediately held.[4] The commission was nominated

[1] We omit here a number of letters in which the Signory communicated their version of the events of 8th April to various prominent personages, or were congratulated on the turn which affairs had taken, and on what their distinguished correspondents were pleased to call their prompt and energetic action. It is impossible, without expanding these concluding chapters to an unwieldy length, to summarise the whole body of contemporary correspondence bearing on the fortunes of Fra Girolamo. And it is the less necessary that we should do so, because for this portion of the history more authentic documents are available than the despatches of ambassadors and other persons, not always well informed.

[2] Landucci mentions the arrest of Domenico Mazzinghi as having taken place on 23rd April (*Diario*, p. 174).

[3] Villari, ii. Append. pp. ccxxxii *sqq.*

[4] Lupi, pp. 65 *sqq.*

on the following day, and it included among its members several of Fra Girolamo's most pronounced enemies, viz. Piero degli Alberti, Giuliano (not to be confounded with Domenico) Mazzinghi, and Doffo Spini himself. Of the remaining fourteen members, one, Bartolo Zati, declined to serve on the commission, declaring, according to Burlamacchi, that "he would have no part in this murder."[1]

But, although the commission was not appointed until the 11th, and the papal letter authorising the proceedings did not arrive till two days later, yet, in the "Processo" drawn up by authority of the Signory, the examination is said to have commenced on the 9th, and to have been conducted under the direction of the commission, and in presence of Messer Tommaso Arnoldi, Canon of Florence, "per ordine et commissione della Sanctità del Papa."[2] It was, perhaps, of little consequence to Savonarola which of his many enemies engaged in the actual task of examination; but the deliberate misrepresentation by which it was made to appear that all had been done in due order, and with competent authority, tells its own tale. The method of examination by torture was freely employed; and whereas, according to the official report, Fra Girolamo underwent three and a half "turns" (tratti) of the rope on the first day of his examination, Vivoli assures us that this number was greatly exceeded on subsequent occasions, and that on one day he suffered as many as fourteen "turns."[3] The eager haste of the Signory to bring the matter to a conclusion is sufficiently attested by the fact that the examination was actively continued on the four last days of Holy Week, and on Easter Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. Of the evidence elicited in the course of this and other interrogatories we shall speak hereafter. Meanwhile, on Wednesday, 13th April, two papal Briefs were received, one of which we here summarise.

[1] Burlamacchi, p. 154. The words are attributed by Burlamacchi to Francesco degli Albizzi, but the error is corrected by the official documents published by Villari (vol. ii., Append. pp. cxlvi, cxlviii). Zati is named in the list of commissioners as at first appointed, but it does not appear in that of those who actually took part in the examination. Francesco degli Albizzi is mentioned in both. It is right to add that on 23rd May, when sentence was passed by the Eight, one of their number, Francesco Cini, absented himself from the proceedings.

[2] Villari, *ibid.*, p. cxlviii. *Cf.* p. cxv.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. cxvi.

12th April; Alexander VI. to the Signory.[1]—It is with great satisfaction (summa cum voluptate) that we have learned from your ambassador with what opportune diligence you have taken measures to repress the mad folly of that son of iniquity, Fra Hieronymo Savonarola, who had not only deluded the people with his vain and pretentious promises (vanis ampulosisque pollicitationibus), but had subsequently resisted your commands and ours by force of arms (armatus, cum suis complicibus). At last, however, he is under confinement; wherefore we give thanks to our loving Saviour, who, whereas He is the light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world, would not suffer your most religious city to be any longer plunged in darkness, and would make known to all the world your faith and devotion to the Holy Roman Church. Wherefore we congratulate you, and express to you our satisfaction with what has been done, and our joy that your city, freed from the dissensions which have rent it, now enjoys the prospect of peace and union. And in accordance with your petition we hereby authorise you to examine ("etiam per torturam") the Friars Hieronymo, Domenico, and Silvestro, and all or any of their accomplices of whatsoever condition and dignity, provided that in the examination you associate with yourselves some ecclesiastical persons at your own choice.

The Pope then goes on to absolve all and sundry from whatsoever ecclesiastical censures they may have incurred in connection with the attack upon S. Marco, or by continuing to attend the sermons of Fra Girolamo since his excommunication, or in other like ways. And as a proof of his paternal care for the city, he grants a plenary indulgence, on the usual conditions, to be gained on the following Low Sunday. He concludes by demanding that, when Savonarola and his associates have been examined, they shall forthwith be sent to Rome, for which purpose he is about to send his own representatives, who shall receive them from the hands of the Signory.

The Brief was unquestionably well calculated to strengthen the hands of the Signory in its proceedings against Fra Girolamo. There were, however, two particulars in which it did not give entire satisfaction to that august body. In the first place, whereas the Pope gave full authority for the examination of the Friar and his companions, his letter embodied no retrospective condonation of past irregularities in this particular; nor did it contain any clause which could be construed as relieving from ecclesiastical censures those who might have incurred them by putting Fra Girolamo to the torture

[1] Gherardi, p. 231. The other Brief, which is not known to have been preserved, was probably the "bolla della indulgentia," to which reference is made in one of the debates to be presently recorded.

before the arrival of the authorisation. And secondly, the demand that the three principal delinquents should be sent to Rome after their examination by the Signory, was one which wounded the pride of the Florentines to a degree which, at this distance of time, may seem surprising.

A Pratica was immediately held to discuss the situation, and the principal question proposed for debate was, whether Fra Girolamo and his two companions should be sent to Rome, in accordance with the terms of the papal Briefs.[1] "Let us first examine them," said Simone Bonciani, "and in the meanwhile we shall have time to consider whether it will be well to send them or not." And with certain variations most of the speakers followed suit. Giovanni Arrighi is of opinion that the discussion should be adjourned till after "these holy days (questi dì santi)," though no one seems to have thought that the sacredness of the season afforded a sufficient ground for postponing the torture of Fra Girolamo. "Let us tell the Pope," said Ridolfo Ridolfi, "that we have not yet examined the Friars, but let us give him fair words, and in the meanwhile urge him to grant us the tithe." This has reference to a request which the Signory had already made, that the Pope would allow them to levy a tithe on all ecclesiastical property in Florence; and it is not a little remarkable how prominent a place is occupied by this question of the tithe in a discussion which was professedly limited to quite another matter. "As regards the sending of the Friars," said Guidantonio Vespucci, "let us make some excuse; meanwhile let us make every effort (fare forza) to secure the tithe." Alamanno Rinuccini thinks that it will be well to hold out hopes that the Pope shall have the Friars, or even to offer them to him. On the other hand, Piero Soderini (nephew of Pagolantonio), is disposed to stand out for the completion of the trial on the spot. "Let the Pope," he suggests, "send some one here to examine the Friars." But on the whole, the tenor of the meeting was clearly in favour of the temporising policy advocated by the first-named speaker.

Not a word appears to have been said during this debate on the subject of the absolution for censures possibly or actually incurred. There can, however, be no doubt that a letter on the subject was addressed to the Pope, and that the matter was regarded as pressing, in view of the obligation of fulfilling the paschal precept.

[1] Lupi, pp. 67 *sqq.*

It is evident that their magnificent lordships were much concerned on this point; though, indeed, one can hardly fail to be reminded of those Jewish priests who, their hands red with the guilt of innocent blood, yet feared to enter Pilate's house lest they should be contaminated, and should be thereby disqualified for participation in the Passover. On 18th April they write to Bonsi urging him to induce the Pope to expedite matters.

18*th April;* The Signory to Bonsi.[1]—The ambassador is instructed to thank the Pope for his Briefs, and in particular for the "bolla della indulgentia" which he has sent. But "perchè fu necessario a qualche buono rispecto examinare Fra Girolamo avanti che venissi la licentia, qualcuno è incorso in censura per averlo tormentato; nè puo essere absoluto, per non essere nel breve clausola alcuna che parli *de praeterito*, quanto alla tortura, però vogliamo iterum nostro nomine supplichiate al Papa per un altro breve, nel quale si contenga potere anchora essere absoluto *de praeterito*," etc.

These fresh supplications were, however, unnecessary, for on the previous day, 17th April, the Pope had already written to the Signory that, having regard to their good intentions, and to the gravity of the circumstances under which they had acted, he granted permission—

"Ut confessorem idoneum secularem vel regularem eligere possitis, qui vos et eos (alios) ab excessibus hujusmodi ac excommunicatione aliisque sententiis censuris et poenis ecclesiasticis . . . absolvere et penitentiam salutarem iniungere possit," etc.[2]

In the meanwhile the examination of the prisoners had been actively carried on. That of Fra Girolamo was held daily, as has been said, from the 9th to the 17th April, *i.e.* from Monday in Holy Week till Easter Tuesday, with the sole exception of Tuesday, the 10th.[3] Notwithstanding all their efforts, however, the examining commissioners had not succeeded in eliciting anything of importance beyond what was already known; and, notwithstanding the assurance alleged to have been given by Ser Ceccone that he would "see to it (acconciare la cosa)," the garbled report of the evidence drawn up by him, and published by command of the Signory, contained little that was of a sensational character.[4]

[1] Marchese, p. 180 (n. 30).

[2] Gherardi, p. 242.

[3] This is distinctly stated in the preamble to the "primo processo" in Villari, *loc. cit.*, p. clxix.

[4] Experience having taught us how easy it is to be misunderstood, we venture to point out that to say that *nothing new* of serious moment had been elicited by

What the motives were which led the Signory to make an abortive attempt to suppress this official edition of the process it is not possible to determine with certainty. According to Lorenzo Vivoli and Fra Benedetto, the civic authorities felt that the published evidence was not sufficient to justify them in the eyes of the people for proceeding to extreme measures against Fra Girolamo.[1] And this might be the case, even though the main facts, concerning which there could be no dispute, were actually such as, in their judgment, to call for the most severe punishment. For the people were not likely to be greatly impressed by the enormity of a plot for the calling of a Council, which was, after all, the real gravamen of the charge against Savonarola. But we are inclined to think that another reason may have had its weight in determining the Signory to attempt the suppression of the process. In the course of Fra Girolamo's evidence, whether truly or falsely reported in these particulars, a considerable number of names of prominent citizens are mentioned. And it may well have been felt that the publication of these names, in such a connection, and at such a crisis, was hardly calculated to promote the peace of the city. It is clear from the debates held at this time that grave apprehensions were entertained lest disturbances should arise if too great a number of citizens were punished. And the mere fear of punishment which those would experience who found themselves compromised by Savonarola's published confession might well have a like effect.

However this may be, orders were issued that all copies of the process should be at once returned to the printer. For the most part the command was obeyed, but naturally enough some few remained in the hands of their possessors; and in course of time

the examination is not the same thing as to say that *nothing serious* was, or could be, proved against him. Ceccone's remark is said to have been overheard by a friend of Cinozzi's, who reported it to that writer. "Nota circa processum et mortem, come un giorno un gran cittadino, di quelli che examinorono il P. f. Jeronimo, in una bottega che era sua di Arte di lana ovvero di seta, insieme con ser Ceccone, e parlando, disse: 'Che cosa è questa? El frate non confessa nulla, noi siamo disfatti, el popol ci lapiderà,' et similia. Allor ser Ceccone disse: 'Lassate fare a me: io acconcerò la cosa in modo che codesto non sarà.' E fecelo. E questo il referì uno il quale, essendo di sopra in soppalco, udì ogni cosa. Loro non pensavon che di sopra fusse nessuno. *Sed nihil occultum quod non reveletur*" (Cinozzi, p. 28). The evidence of an eavesdropper, reported at second hand by a partisan witness, is not, however, to be implicitly trusted.

[1] Vivoli, *Sesta Giornata*, *apud* Villari, *loc. cit.*, p. cxiv.

a second edition was put upon the market by private enterprise.[1]

It is clear however that, apart from the question of publication, considerable dissatisfaction was felt at the result of the first series of interrogatories, for a second examination was held on 21st April, and the two following days. The torture was applied with increased violence, but to little effect, for this "second process," which has been brought to light by Villari in our own days, adds nothing of moment to what can be gathered from the first.[2]

But Fra Girolamo was not the only person put upon his trial on this occasion. The examination of the other prisoners was distributed over various days from the 11th to the 27th April, and many of them, like Savonarola himself, were examined a second time.[3] The 27th seems to have been marked by a specially energetic effort to extort evidence, as the following entry in Landucci's Diary sufficiently attests.

"And on 27th April all the citizens who had been arrested for this affair were put to the torture, so that from nine in the morning till nightfall (dalle 15 ore insino a sera) their cries could be continually heard in the Bargello" (*i.e.* the city prison).[4]

In one particular Ser Ceccone and his employers could flatter themselves that they had been successful. Among the effects of the falsified process of Savonarola not the least remarkable was the complete break-down, at least for the time, of the confidence of the most devoted followers of the Friar. On 19th April a portion of the first "process" was read before the Signory and an assembly of citizens. The devout physician Luca Landucci thus records the effect of this proceeding in his own case:—

"And on 19th April 1498, they read before the Council, in the great hall, the process of Fra Girolamo, which he had written with his own hand; a man whom we had held for a prophet, but who (now) confessed

[1] Vivoli (*loc. cit.*, p. cxvi) relates the recall of the official edition, but says that a friend of his retained his copy. Villari seems to be in error when he writes (p. 201): "Dopo qualche giorno, se ne vide comparire una seconda edizione." Had this been so, Vivoli might have been expected to mention it. That two editions appeared 'in the fifteenth century," as Villari states, is, no doubt true. And Burlamacchi (p. 163) speaks of the second edition as if it had appeared within the lifetime of Ceccone, and therefore within a few months of the first publication. But this is not quite the same as saying that it appeared "dopo qualche giorno."

[2] Villari, ii. 203, and Append. pp. clxxv *sqq.*

[3] The dates of the various depositions are given at the head of each. They are, as has been said, in Villari, ii. Append. pp. cxcix *sqq.*

[4] Landucci, p. 174.

that he was no prophet, and that he had not received from God the things which he had preached. . . . And I was present at the reading of this process, whereat I wondered, and was altogether astounded. And my soul was deeply grieved to see so great an edifice cast down by reason of having been built on the bad foundation of one single lie. I had expected that Florence would prove to be the new Jerusalem whence good laws were to come forth, and the splendid example of a virtuous life, and I had looked to see the renovation of the Church, the conversion of the infidels, and the consolation of all good men. And now I perceived the contrary, and for medicine I took the words: 'In voluntate tua Domine, omnia sunt posita.'"[1]

Whether it was officially announced that the document read before the Council was in the handwriting of Fra Girolamo it is hardly possible to determine, but we may at least feel sure that every means short of an official announcement had been taken by the Friar's enemies, including the Signory and the Board of Examiners, to spread and confirm the report. Somenzi gives his own version of the affair, which shows clearly enough the motives of the Signory. Somenzi, as will be seen, either believed, or affected to believe, that graver matters lay behind.

19*th April;* Somenzi to Sforza.[2]—To-day the Signory have caused to be published, in presence of the Great Council, a portion of the process of Fra Hieronimo, *that is to say, of certain things which are of no great importance.* And this was done solely with the intention of enlightening the people, and letting them see that he was a wicked scoundrel (uno scelerato e ribaldo); because many of his followers declared that he was a good and just man, and that neither by means of the rope nor of any other form of torture had his examiners been able to discover any crime in him; for it was alleged that if they had really discovered anything of the kind, they would not have let one hour go by without making known the result of their investigations.

Landucci was by no means the only person whose faith was shaken by the report of Savonarola's examination. Some portion of it at least must have been shown or read to the friars of S. Marco. Nothing else, it would seem, can account for the concluding words of the deposition of Fra Ruberto Ubaldini da Gagliano, of whom we shall hear more in the next chapter. He writes:—

"With the exception of the misgivings of which I have spoken, and which I afterwards put aside . . . I never observed anything amiss in Fra Hieronymo, but on the contrary I always saw in him great signs of holiness and devotion . . . and sound and solid learning; so much so

[1] Landucci, p. 173.

[2] Villari, ii. Append. p. cv.

that I would have suffered any kind of death to attest this. *But since he has so craftily hoodwinked and deceived us, I thank God and your lordships that you have enlightened us;* and we beg that you will keep these good sons of yours here, and will not suffer them to be dispersed. . . . And whereas we were told yesterday that your lordships had it in mind to send back Fra Domenico and Fra Silvestro to our house, we have all held counsel together, and determined that we will not have them again ('perchè sono scandalosi'). Keep them you, and do what you like with them ('con misericordia'), or let the Pope or the General dispose of them ; but as for us, we do not wish to contaminate our innocence by complicity with the sins of others."[1]

It will be seen that Fra Ruberto here takes it upon himself to speak in the name of the community. That he did not misrepresent their sentiments is abundantly proved by the letter which, at the instance of Fra Malatesta Sacramoro, they despatched to the Pope on 21st April. "Pen cannot write, nor tongue express"—so they say—the gratitude which they owe, after God, to his Holiness for the fatherly solicitude with which he has delivered them from "the depths of the darkness of error," in which they had been plunged by the crafty and cunning deceits of Fra Hieronymo of Ferrara. In words which reek with nauseous and fulsome flattery, and which condemn their late Prior in every mood and tense, they implore forgiveness, in consideration of the good faith under which they have acted; and, strange to say, they petition for the maintenance of their existence as an independent congregation immediately subject to the General of the Order. Their letter, with the Pope's reply, may be found in Perrens.[2] We will not waste space by transcribing them here. There is, however, one extraordinary letter written on the following day, for which we must find room. Fra Ruberto da Gagliano, who has been mentioned above, had for some time exercised the functions of private secretary to Fra Girolamo. His successor in the office had been a certain Fra Niccolò da Milano of whom, as well as of Fra Ruberto, the reader will hear more anon. The following is a literal translation of the missive which this worthy thought proper to write to the Signory in the day of his late Prior's dire distress.

Fra Niccolò da Milano to the Examining Commissioners.[3]—"To the Right Honourable (magnificis) the Lords Examiners of the false prophet,

[1] Villari, ii. Append. p. cclxii.

[2] Perrens, Doc. xvii., xviii., pp. 394 *sqq.* (ed. 1856). The Signory also wrote to the Pope at this time on behalf of the brethren of S. Marco.

[3] Gherardi, p. 252.

Hyeronimo of Ferrara. Right honourable and my most excellent Lords: Understanding that your lordships desire to have information from me concerning the affairs of Fra Hyeronimo of Ferrara, and knowing as I do the incredible deceits (l'inexcogitabile fraude) of that seducer (at the thought of which I am astounded, and beside myself, for it seems to me that no greater wickedness can be imagined under heaven), I am no less desirous to explain and lay before you all that I know of him, and all my dealings with him, than your lordships are [that I should do so]; in which dealings I, walking in simplicity of heart before God, thought to do a service to Him. And whereas I find myself unable to leave the house by reason of the infirmity which I suffer, I pray your lordships to send one of your secretaries to me, to whom I may reveal everything that I know, the truth of which it will be very easy to test and verify. And whereas Fra Hyeronimo entrusted certain letters to me in confession, of which Fra Domenico and Fra Sylvestro likewise had knowledge, and concerning which I suppose that those three will have spoken (le habbino manifestate); to the end that without scruple of conscience I may be at liberty to declare everything, I pray your lordships to cause Fra Hyeronimo to draw up a paper (una polizza) in his own handwriting, wherein he shall give me permission to speak of those things which he has confided to me under seal of confession. And if it should so be that you desire that I should convey myself as best I can to your presence, I am prepared to undergo any discomfort to satisfy your lordships, to whom I commend myself.—From the Convent of S. Marco, Florence, 12th April, 1498. Your lordships' unworthy brother, NICHOLAS OF MILAN, O.P."

We learn with some satisfaction that this reverend gentleman was, on 27th May, invited by the Signory to enjoy the blessings of exile from Florentine territory for the space of ten years. Whether the change of air proved beneficial to his health we cannot say, but it is safe to conjecture that for all his fine writing he did not obtain another berth as private and confidential secretary. Fra Ruberto da Gagliano, Fra Mariano Ughi, and another, shared his exile; and a decree of 4th June imposed a like penalty on Fra Malatesta Sacramoro and several of his fellow-religious.[1]

As the mention of knowledge communicated, or said to have been communicated, "in confession" will more than once recur hereafter, it may be well to remind the reader that whereas the seal of confession binds the confessor, it does not, and cannot, bind the penitent. Still less, of course, can the communication of documents by a religious superior to his subordinate, or by any one—priest or layman—to a friend, be brought under the sacramental "sigillum." When, then, we find Fra Girolamo speaking of having entrusted

[1] Villari, *loc. cit.*, pp. cclxxxviii *sqq.*

secret documents to one or another of his subordinates or friends, or when we find them speaking of having received such documents, "in confession," we can only conclude that a very inaccurate and misleading terminology had taken root at S. Marco, and one which bears witness to an unhealthy state of things as prevailing within the inner circle of Savonarola's more intimate associates.

But to return to the course of public affairs. On 21st April the Signory wrote to Bonsi, enclosing a letter to the Pope, and an extract from the process.[1] The letters call for no special comment beyond the remark that they are couched in language of unmeasured vituperation of the Friar. On 25th April a portion of the second process was read before the Council, and on the following day a Pratica was held.[2] Two points were proposed for discussion, viz. (1) "Sopra il provedimento di danaio," for the republic was in sore financial straits, and (2) "concerning the examination of the Friars." The minutes are of the briefest, only four speeches being reported, and these in the fewest possible words. But enough is said to make it clear that a revulsion of popular feeling was seriously apprehended.

Simone Bonciani. — As regards the examination, *let the citizens be reassured*, and let them be given to understand that the affair will be for the common weal (credendo questo habbi a essere utilissima cosa).

Ridolfo Ridolfi.—Let the city be pacified; this is the first condition necessary for the raising of funds.

Guidantonio Vespucci agrees with the last speaker as to the necessity for pacifying the city. To this end it is desirable that too much stress should not be laid on the joint letter of the citizens in favour of Fra Girolamo, because, in this affair, many people followed one another like sheep; and the law allows us to overlook such matters; but if there be any who are guilty of graver crimes, let them be punished ("con misericordia") by the Eighty or by the Great Council.[3] For the subsidy a new provision must be made, but care must be taken that the officials proceed according to law, and not arbitrarily.

Guido Mannelli agrees that the joint letter must not be taken too seriously. The real fault was of a few only. The rest followed out of simplicity.

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[1] Marchese, pp. 183 *sqq.* (nn. 33, 34).

[2] Villari, ii. 203; Lupi, p. 69.

[3] The "subscription," or joint letter to the Pope, of a number of Florentine citizens in favour of Savonarola, which had been set on foot in the summer of 1497, but never carried to completion, formed one of the chief heads on which the witnesses at the trial were examined.

A much longer debate, however, took place on the following day.[1] And this, too, turned principally on the joint letter to which reference has already been made. The first speakers insist that the law—which forbade unauthorised communications with the Pope, or indeed with any sovereign—must be vindicated, and that while those who were guilty as principals must be punished, the rest may be more leniently dealt with. It is interesting to note how frequently the words "con misericordia" recur, even in the recommendations that justice be done. "Che la cosa si tractassi," says Doffo Spini, "con misericordia e con ragione." But Guidantonio Vespucci, whose words evidently carried more weight in these discussions than those of any other speaker, is not quite satisfied with the opinions expressed by his colleagues.

"Those who say that the laws must be observed say well, and I quite agree with them. But I understand that it is the duty of a judge to pass sentence in accordance with facts (secondo *acta et actitata*) and not after his own fancy. Now, if we could clearly ascertain, in accordance with the distinction which has been laid down, who were the leaders in this matter, and who the followers, well and good. But because I don't know what part was taken by each, I think they ought either to be all convicted or all acquitted. And this being so, I submit that it is better to acquit one who is guilty, than to convict one who is innocent."

Several of the councillors thereafter declared that they saw no punishable crime in the joint letter, others think that a light penalty ought to be inflicted ("se ne facci qualche segno, ma con misericordia"), and Bernardo Rucellai roundly declares that an act of justice which would ruin the city would be no true justice.

On 28th April the case of the persons who had been examined concerning the affair of Fra Girolamo was again discussed.[2] Ridolfo Ridolfi expressed his satisfaction that the whole affair has turned out so much less serious than had been supposed ("hanno preso gran conforto per essere paruta piccola cosa"). Let the business be settled to-night. Let the joint letter be passed over, but let more account be made of the letters to princes. Piero Parenti counsels that justice be done on the more guilty, but "con gran misericordia." Guidantonio Vespucci would have the joint letter passed over as not punishable. But the writing of letters to princes, with a view of inducing them to call a Council, especially at so critical a time, is a much more serious matter. Those who have been guilty in this

[1] Lupi, pp. 69 *sqq.*

[2] Lupi, pp. 72 *sqq.*

respect should be punished; "for I think there are statutes which prohibit the writing to princes." So, too, those should be punished who sent arms to S. Marco, and those who took up arms there contrary to the commands of the Signory. As for those who have conspired not to vote for particular citizens, "in the first place, we have no juridical proofs; secondly, where many have been at fault, there is room for some indulgence; and thirdly, to punish a multitude would not promote the peace of the city."[1]

Most of the speakers who follow express their agreement, in substance, with Vespucci; and on the whole, they are in favour of mild measures for the sake of the general peace ("con quella humanità che sia per preservare e' nostri cittadini"). Jacopo Schiattesi "for the seventh bench" says:—

"Three of my colleagues think the whole affair very trivial, three others think it of great importance; as for me, I think the city was never in worse case. Let us punish the guilty with clemency, and settle the matter without scandal."

Hardly a word appears to have been said, in the course of these debates, concerning Fra Girolamo himself and his two more immediate companions. But there can be no doubt that their guilt was taken as abundantly proved, and as deserving of capital punishment. The only speaker who, according to the published reports, explicitly alludes to the three Friars, is Niccolò Rucellai, who declares that he and his colleagues "would desire to see them severely (agramente) punished, but with the Pope's permission."

The upshot of these protracted discussions was the infliction of various fines and sentences of banishment or temporary disfranchisement on several of the principal persons among those who had been examined.[2] And this being once settled, it only remained to consider the case of Savonarola himself, and of Domenico and Salvestro.

On 5th May the question was once more proposed for discussion whether the three should be sent to Rome, in accordance with the demands of the Pope.[3] The prevailing sentiment was that the Pope should by all means be requested to allow the execution to

[1] The concluding sentence of the speech, as reported, is not very clear: "Et quelli che per mentecattagine havessin peccato, fare che il comune ne sentissi qualche utile" (p. 74).

[2] Villari, ii. 216, who refers to unpublished documents in the Florentine archives.

[3] Lupi, pp. 75 *sqq*. This is the last of the debates of which he has published the minutes.

take place at Florence, where the alleged crimes had been committed; but that he should be invited to send commissaries to examine them on his own behalf. That they must suffer death is assumed; and how little regard was felt for the prisoners, by comparison with the importance of what was assumed to be for the public welfare, is evidenced by the advice of Giovanni Canacci that if they must be sent to Rome they should first be once more examined; but that it is most undesirable to send them, "as the execution can take place here much more quietly."

As the result of the debate the Signory wrote to the Pope entreating him to allow the execution to take place at Florence, and to Bonsi, urging him to press the matter.[1] At last, on 12th May, the Pope acceded to the request, sending, however, as he had been invited, two special commissaries with full powers to examine the Friars *de novo*, in the hope of extorting some fresh evidence. At the same time he grants to the Florentines the coveted tithe, to be imposed during three successive years.[2] No wonder that the friends of Fra Girolamo, with a pardonable disregard of the niceties of arithmetic, should have seen in this threefold tithe a resemblance to the thirty pieces of silver for which Judas sold his Master to the chief priests of the Jews.

The papal commissaries appointed for the ungracious task of once more examining a man already enfeebled by torture and imprisonment were Francesco Romolino, a cleric of Ilerda in Spain, and an official of the papal Court, who was soon afterwards created a cardinal, and Savonarola's quondam friend and supporter Fra Gioacchino Torriano, General of the Dominican Order. If Burlamacchi is to be believed, Romolino showed from the outset a most unseemly levity concerning the whole affair, and openly gave it to be understood that the issue of the trial was a foregone conclusion. "We shall have a fine bonfire," he is reported to have said, "for I have the sentence of condemnation in my pocket (in petto)."[3] For Romolino, personally, we have no kind of sympathy. He appears to have been a man of scandalous life, and no one has put on record a single word in his favour.[4] At the same time, it is not wise to

[1] Marchese, pp. 186 *sqq.* (nn. 36, 37).

[2] Gherardi, p. 266.

[3] Burlamacchi, p. 163.

[4] Filipepi (p. 500) relates a shocking incident of his visit to Florence, with which we will not soil these pages. Unfortunately, the affair seems to have been only too notorious.

attach too much importance to mere street-corner gossip. If the story which we have just reported has any foundation at all, it is probably this, that Romolino made some imprudent statement to the effect that he already possessed proof enough, viz. in the intercepted letter to the King of France, to secure the condemnation of the Friar, even though no fresh evidence should be forthcoming. For, indeed, the business of the commissaries was not so much to try the issue "guilty or not guilty," as to ratify the proceedings which had already taken place, and to endeavour, if possible, to elicit some fresh information from the prisoners. Another brutal saying is attributed to Romolino by the same authority, which perhaps deserves mention, though it must of course be received with reserve. It is alleged, and is probably true, that many were in favour of showing mercy to Fra Domenico, of whom nothing worse could be said, on the most unfavourable hypothesis, than that he had been misled by Savonarola. To this more lenient course Romolino is said to have been inclined. But when it was represented to him that to spare Fra Domenico would be to provide for the perpetuation of Savonarola's teaching and work, he replied—so the story goes—that "one beggarly friar (uno frataccio) more or less" did not much matter.[1]

Of the behaviour of Torriano no record seems to have been preserved, and in view of the high character which he bore, we may at least give him credit for having regarded his task in the light of an unwelcome and unpleasant duty. However this may be, it is certain beyond dispute that on 20th May, and the two following days, Fra Girolamo and his two companions were once more put to the torture, and once more examined, in particular concerning the efforts which had been made for the calling of a Council.

For the details of the evidence given at this and at the earlier examinations the reader must turn, if he has a mind to do so, to the following chapters.

[1] Burlamacchi, *loc. cit.*

CHAPTER XXII

THE DEPOSITIONS OF FRA DOMENICO, FRA SALVESTRO, AND NINETEEN OTHERS

IN all matters wherein there is need of sifting the true from the false, it is obviously well to commence with what is certain beyond dispute. Whatever may be thought of the value of the alleged confessions, or "processes," as they are called, of Fra Girolamo himself, there is no question as to the genuineness of the autograph deposition of Fra Domenico, which has been brought to light by Villari within recent years, and of which Fra Benedetto declares that it is "vero in tucto e per tucto." Of Fra Salvestro's evidence he says that it is "vero ma non in tucto," for it has been altered by sundry additions and omissions which, however, are, he says, of trifling moment. Then, too, the depositions of the nineteen other witnesses are for the most part in their own handwriting, characterised as this is in almost every case by more or less marked peculiarities of phrase and orthography. There can then be no doubt that the whole collection, which has been published in the Appendix to Villari's second volume, constitutes a valuable, and, on the whole, a trustworthy body of evidence. We therefore propose, before touching upon Fra Girolamo's supposed confessions, to set forth the substance of those of his companions. They will, perhaps, be found to be of greater interest than his own, with all its attendant drawbacks of questionable authenticity and doubtful accuracy.

The principal heads on which the various deponents were examined are as follows:—

I. The alleged visions and revelations of Fra Girolamo.
II. His letters to various European sovereigns.
III. The alleged political intrigues of Savonarola himself and of the Friars of S. Marco in general.
IV. The "subscription," or joint letter, of a number of Florentine citizens to the Pope in favour of Savonarola.

V. The affair of the Cimento, or Ordeal by Fire.

VI. The Riot on Palm Sunday, 8th April.[1]

Concerning the last-named point, enough has been said above, in chapter xx., and it will be unnecessary to deal with it again. The other heads of evidence may be taken in their order.

I. *The visions and revelations of Fra Girolamo.*—On this head it is obvious that no one except Fra Girolamo himself and his two more intimate companions, Domenico and Salvestro, was in a position to say anything definite, and, indeed, the other witnesses do not appear to have been questioned on this subject. The autograph testimony of Fra Domenico is full of interest, and deserves to be here summarised :—

"I, Fra Domenico, a servant of God, having been requested to set down in writing the truth, so far as it is known to me, concerning the prophecies and the doctrine preached by the reverend father, Fra Hieronymo, do here testify, in presence of the most Holy Trinity, and of the Immaculate Queen of Florence, the Mother of our King and Redeemer, and of all the heavenly court, that what I shall here write is the simple truth.

"Our father, Fra Hieronymo, when he was expounding, I think, the prophet Amos, having set forth some exposition which it was not time to give, since God did not so will, made use of some expression similar to that of the prophet himself: 'Non sum propheta—I am no prophet.' Moreover, I remember to have once heard him say that he hoped that one of his companions would one day explain how he came by the knowledge of those things which he had set forth. And when I afterwards asked him whether he had said this on his own account, he answered, No (implying that he had said it by divine inspiration).

"I then have ever firmly believed, and as I know of no reason to the contrary I still believe, that Pisa is to be ours again, and that you will also come into possession of other lands which were never yours before, and that Florence will be richer and more powerful and more glorious than ever, not by her own power, but by that of God and of His Mother; and so, too, I believe those other things foretold by Fra Hieronymo concerning the chastisement of the Church, and the conversion of the

[1] We take no account of the stupid calumny that the friars of S. Marco had hoarded up treasures within their walls. This, indeed, if we may believe Benedetto, was one of the principal topics on which it was proposed to examine the witnesses (Villari, *loc. cit.*, p. cxxxii). Those of the witnesses who mention the subject do so only to scout the notion. We gather from the depositions that certain goods and a sum of money belonging to the Medici was left for safety in the convent at the time of Piero's flight. But everything had been restored. This seems to have been the only foundation for a charge which, considering the unbounded liberality of Fra Girolamo in the distribution of alms, was as cruel as it was ridiculous.

Turks within the lifetime of this present generation. This faith I most firmly hold. And your Highnesses ought not to take offence at this; for this belief of mine does no harm either to me or to the city; and in such matters every one is free to believe what seems good to him. Nor do I trouble myself about the question how these things have been made manifest by God; nor have I ever deluded the people by preaching about them, because I have firmly and sincerely believed these things, and have spoken of them solely for the glory of God and the good of your city, and not from any motive of vain-glory or human respect.

"It happened once that the guardian angels of us three appeared to Fra Sylvestro, and with a rope or chain of gold bound us all together, saying that we must remain united, and that we must have but one heart and soul, for that God so willed. Wherefore, if ever any small matter of dissension arose among us, we were reprehended by these angels. And they told Fra Sylvestro to keep himself humble, and us likewise, for that prophecies and revelations do not save the soul, but are given for the good of the Church, and that his revelations in particular were given him not for his own sake but for that of Fra Hieronymo. Moreover, they (the angels) wished that when I was preaching in place of Fra Hieronymo (on account of which employment people used to call me Fra Fattoraccio—Brother Factotum) I should occasionally set forth some revelation of his or Fra Sylvestro's as if it had been my own. And in like manner, seeing that we had but one heart, when Fra Sylvestro received some revelation for the sake of Fra Hieronymo, the latter would put it forth as his own, such being the will of God. And, in so doing, he uttered no falsehood (1), because God has done the same thing in other cases, as may be learned from H. Scripture; (2) because they had but one heart; (3) because the revelations were given for this end (erano ordinate alla predica et a lui); and (4) because the prophetic 'light' concerning these and other things was impressed on the mind of Fra Hieronymo. For in such matters the 'light' is like the sense of touch. But the aforesaid angels warned us that we should keep these matters secret among ourselves, and should by no means reveal them to any one else, for if we should do so God would be angry with us. Yet, notwithstanding these divine favours, we were most unwilling to speak of things to come, and most careful not to go beyond what we were explicitly commanded to make known. And if, as very rarely happened, any one of us in some particular went beyond our commission in such matters, we were severely reproved and punished.

"I have never professed, nor do I now profess, to have had any prophetic revelation or vision, except that once I related a certain vision [described in some detail] as having been seen by myself, which had in fact been communicated to me by Fra Sylvestro, and which he commissioned me, on the part of the angels, to declare that I had myself seen. And this was no falsehood, for we had but one heart, and in making the declaration I did but obey God."[1]

[1] Villari, ii. Append. pp. ccvii *sqq.*

Again he writes, a little later :—

"I never had the smallest reason to suspect that Fra Hieronymo was deluding the people, or acting otherwise than sincerely. On the contrary, he appeared to me to be most upright in his intentions, and a man of singular virtue. As for me, I regarded him with the utmost reverence, and obeyed him in all simplicity. . . . I know that he, as a consequence of his revelations, had determined to write to certain princes *that this Pope is not a Christian nor a true Pope*, and this 'key' I believed that he would one day turn."[1]

Fra Salvestro Maruffi deposed, in substance, as follows :—

"From my childhood I had a habit of talking in my sleep, repeating things which I knew by heart. I became a friar at the age of fourteen. Sometimes I would recite a whole Epistle of S. Paul, and once, at Venice, I repeated the whole of a sermon in the German language.

"Fra Hieronimo (*sic*) began to preach at S. Marco in 1490, expounding the Apocalypse (Epochalipse, *sic*), and afterwards he preached at S. Maria del Fiore (the Duomo) where he foretold the renovation of the Church, and spoke on his other favourite topics. I was preaching at San Gimignano, and on hearing of these prophecies was greatly displeased, and, although I defended him before others, I did not do so from my heart, and Fra Malatesta would testify that on my return from San Gimignano I did not believe in him, and thought him deluded. Indeed, I told him that he seemed to me to be mad and beside himself; especially as I had known him to be averse to such things. He told me that he had good grounds for what he said, and exhorted me to pray to Messer Dominedio that He would inspire me to believe the truth. I did so, and whether from my tendency to dreams, or by diabolical illusion, I felt myself reproved by 'the spirits' for not believing, and on my relating the matter to him he answered that God wished me well. In particular, he told me that he had a sign from God whereby he knew when the things which he foretold were true, viz. that he felt the cross and the name of Jesus impressed (scolpito) on his bosom.

"And I often related my dreams to him; and he said that having prayed about the matter, he had received an assurance that these experiences of mine (queste cose nostre) were truths and not dreams. And so for the great reverence and faith which I entertained in his regard I began to believe him absolutely; and yet I often had my doubts. He, however, always told me to take his word for it that the things were from God. And so things went on till about a month ago; sometimes I believed and sometimes I doubted, but now I believe absolutely that it was a delusion. Once I had a certain vision of good spirits and bad which I communicated to Fra Domenico, and thereafter he, preaching in the Palazzo, gave out, as I was told, that he had seen the vision. Another vision I had during the night before the ordeal," etc.[2]

[1] Villari, ii. Append. pp. ccxvi *sqq.*

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. ccxx *sqq.*

"It happened that some twenty or twenty-five times Fra Girolamo came to me, and told me that he did not know what to preach about, and begged me to pray for him, as he feared that God had abandoned him. Then he would make his confession, and after all would preach a beautiful sermon."[1]

In connection with the above, a few words from the testimony of Fra Ruberto Ubaldini may here be given, which serve to throw light on the internal condition of the convent, and on the general conduct of Fra Girolamo and his principal companions:—

"Some years since, I was sent to Rome about the affair of the separation of S. Marco from the Lombard convents, with letters from the Father General, and from the Cardinal de' Medici, and others, in support of our cause. And when, after some delay, we had carried our point, Fra Hieronymo assured us that this affair was the means whereby God deigned to reform our Order, and to do great things; and that the Holy Spirit would be poured upon us in such abundance that we should be astounded; and that this was to be a most perfect Congregation, so that members of all religious Orders would flock to us, as well as seculars of great credit and of great ability, and that this was to be the most perfect of all religious congregations. Now to me it did not seem that the results corresponded to such promises as these after the fashion which I had imagined. It is true that herein I was somewhat indiscreet, for, as a result of excessive austerities, many of the brethren were taken ill, and accordingly it was found necessary to admit some mitigation of these rigours, for the sake, especially, of the young. Yet I could not but see that it was a cause of scandal that there should be three great personages ('gran maestri'—Fra Girolamo's favourite term of reproach) in the house, who usurped all authority, and claimed for themselves every kind of liberty and exemption, and practised none of that subjection which their profession required. It was evident that everything was settled among these three, with the occasional assistance of Fra Antonio da Holandia ('che è padre di religiosa vita'); and that the business of all the rest of the community was to assent to whatever was done or determined by these three.[2] Seeing this, I could not but regret and murmur at it; and I even complained to Fra Hieronymo, calling this mode of government a tyranny. Moreover, I talked about these matters with certain others of the brethren who suffered under the same

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[1] Villari, ii. Append. p. ccxxxi. Salvestro's deposition concludes with the words: "Finalmente dico che Fra Girolamo v' ha ingannato." We can have little hesitation in ascribing them, with Villari, to Ser Ceccone. "Le parole che precedono," he says, "valgono invece a dimostrare la buona fede e sincerità di Savonarola" (*loc. cit.*, *note* 3).

[2] It is, perhaps, worthy of note, that the person named by Savonarola himself and other witnesses as having been most in his confidence, at least towards the end, was not Fra Antonio di Holandia, but Fra Niccolò da Milano.

temptation as myself, and especially with a certain Fra Antonio da Radda. For this reason we were always held in subjection, and lost all credit and reputation in the community, for which I thank God, for this turned out to be for the good of my soul. Fra Hieronymo, with great tact, meekness, and humility, reasoned with me on the subject, and in the end persuaded me; for, seeing as I did, so much virtue and union of hearts, and such virtue in the community, I conceived a scruple that I might hinder the work of God if I did not keep quiet; and Fra Hieronymo likewise appealed to my conscience by telling me that I had in many particulars resisted the will of God as declared by him, whereupon I humbled myself and begged his forgiveness. Nevertheless, these same doubts continued to haunt me, especially when I saw Fra Silvestro spending the whole day in the cloisters, surrounded by a group of citizens, gossiping with them (con circuli di cittadini a torno et chiachiere). This I could not approve, and accordingly I once more grew discontented, and grumbled about the matter with various members of the community. However, in the end, there was no remedy but patience. As for Fra Domenico, I believe him to be a man of perfect integrity, but of considerable obstinacy (di buona purità ma di dura cervice), and too ready to believe in the revelations and dreams of women and of weak-minded and foolish persons. And if any one of us did not believe these things his life was made a burden to him (chi non li credeva era tra noi in continuo martyrio). It was very seldom that these three joined the rest in community duties, because they were continually occupied in these affairs of their own, and all this was to me very disedifying."[1]

Ubaldini further relates how, at an earlier date, he had acted as private secretary to Fra Girolamo, helping him to write, or copying for him, the tract *De Simplicitate*, "et tucte le altre sue opere," and likewise his letters, but only those of less importance. In those "primi tempi" he accompanied his superior to Pisa, Lucca, Pistoia, and Prato, when he went there to preach ("innamorato della sua doctrina et optimi et honesti costumi"). During the last two or three years, however, a coolness had sprung up between them, and his place was taken by Fra Niccolò da Milano. Fra Baldassari Bonsi and Fra Francesco de' Medici also acted as his personal attendants ("et io stavo al mio studio et a mia devotione").[2]

II. *The Letters to Foreign Princes.*—A single sentence on this subject has already been quoted from the deposition of Fra

[1] Villari, *loc. cit.*, pp. cclvii *sqq.*
[2] *Ibid.*, p. cclvii.

Domenico, but it only reveals the circumstance that Domenico was aware of his superior's intention to write such letters, and tells us nothing of any steps actually taken. Francesco del Pugliese, it appears, was also questioned on the same topic, but his replies to the interrogatory have not been preserved. It was he whom Savonarola had charged to write, or cause to be written, a letter to some influential person in England with a view to enlisting the zeal of Henry VII. on behalf of the project of a Council.[1]

The testimony of Domenico Mazzinghi, however, is set down at some length, and it entirely confirms the accuracy of the report of Fra Girolamo's deposition so far as it concerns this matter. It is right, however, to observe that this, as appears from the form of the document, is not an autograph deposition; and the same remark applies to that of Simone del Nero, to be presently quoted.

"Domenico Mazzinghi, being interrogated by word of mouth as to how he contrived to send the letter which he wrote to Giovacchino (Guasconi) on the affair of the Council, made answer to this effect:—

"Toward the end of last March Fra Girolamo sent for me and said to me: 'I want you to do something for me. I know that you are zealous for the work of God, and I want you to write a letter to Giovacchino, of which I will give you a draft, and also to enclose a copy of a letter which I have written to the Pope.' I replied that I was willing to do whatever he wished . . . for the honour of God. Next day Fra Nicholò da Milano gave me the draft, with a copy of the letter to the Pope. Then I wrote the letter with my own hand, and beyond what was contained in the aforesaid draft, I added, on my own account, that on the day of the Carnival more than 3000 had confessed and communicated, while the rest gave themselves up to dissipation. And so I sent the letter to Giovacchino. Besides this, I wrote another letter which accompanied the first, wherein I described the manner of life of Fra Girolamo, and the fruitful results of his zeal, and how on his account the city was divided, and that he had need of God's help; and I added that he was to take a suitable occasion to show the first letter to the King of France.

"Giovacchino replied to the effect that he was pleased with my communication, but that he could not show it to the King because the King was dead. This reply of his I have not shown to any one."[2]

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[1] "Quella (lettera) Dinghilterra (*sic*) fu commessa a Francesco del pugliese: il quale aveva in Firenze uno amico suo inghilese," etc. (Process of Fra Girolamo, Villari, *loc. cit.*, p. clxxi).

[2] Process of Fra Girolamo, Villari, *loc. cit.*, pp. cclxii *sqq.*

As Mazzinghi's letter to Guasconi has been preserved, this has seemed the most convenient place in which to give a summary of its contents.

Domenico Mazzinghi to Giovacchino Guasconi.[1]—You will have heard of the persecutions which have been raised against our father, Fra Hieronymo da Ferrara, especially at Rome, by reason of his having laid bare the vices of the clergy, which are an abomination to God and the world. Wherefore the Pope has excommunicated him, and has threatened our city with an interdict, in order to prevent him from preaching. To this he has been instigated chiefly by certain abandoned men in the city; whereas all good men and lovers of the truth esteem this man most highly; and it is wonderful to see how great is the fervour which he has aroused, especially by his predictions of the renovation of the Church, and of the conversion of the heathen, and by the terrible threats which he has uttered about scourges which are to fall on all Italy, and especially on Rome, for its intolerable wickedness, etc. Now, this servant of God, undeterred by the fulminations of the Pope, has written him a very severe letter (una lettera molto rigida), as you may see by the enclosed copy, which I send you in order that you may show it to his Most Christian Majesty (alla Maestà di cotesto Crystianissimo Sire). Moreover, he proclaims that he is about to make known certain things which will astound the whole world—things which he will prove, not merely by human reason, but by divine miracles. Great, indeed, are these matters, and well calculated to inflame every cold heart (da fare rescaldare ongni adiacciato pecto), especially when we see the condition to which the Church has been brought. And yet it seems that no one takes any practical steps to remedy this state of things by procuring the Council which is needed (li debiti Concilii), as used to be done. To this the most Christian king might and ought to set his hand, for he will have to render to God a severe account of his negligence in the matter. To procure this would be a much greater thing than to conquer all the infidels; for if the foundation should fail, the faith of Christ will be brought to ruin. May God inspire his Majesty, and others who have the power, not to allow the most precious Blood of Christ to be thus insulted, for, to tell the truth, it is more shamefully handled by these wicked prelates and priests than it would be by Jews and Moors. For they at least believe something, but these men show by their deeds that they believe nothing at all. If any one would be satisfied of this, let him go to Rome, and there see the wickedness that is carried on, no longer in secret, but openly and publicly ("chè sotto el ciel non si potria pensare le magiori scelleragine"). I feel sure that this servant of God is meditating some great thing; and I am sure that His Majesty is one of the first to whom he will make it known, because, as he has so often told him, he (the king) is the chosen minister of God, etc., etc.

[1] Process of Fra Girolamo, Villari, *loc. cit.*, p. lxix. The letter is undated.

This letter reached its destination, as the writer declares in his deposition, a few days after the death of Charles VIII. Guasconi's reply we must perforce omit.[1] It is, indeed, of merely personal interest.

The deposition of Simone del Nero closely resembles that of Mazzinghi:—

"On 24th March, Giovanni Spina came to me in my house and said that Fra Girolamo wished to see and speak with me. I went at once to S. Marco, and there, in the infirmary, I found Fra Girolamo with the ambassador of Ferrara. Turning aside from the envoy, he said to me: 'You know that I have preached the renovation of the Church and the conversion of the infidels; it is God's will that this work should go forward. I want you to write a letter to your brother Nicholò, your agent in Spain, of which I will give you a draft; and it must be so written that it can be shown. I will also give you a copy of a letter which I have written to the Pope, which you must send along with your own.' I said: 'Nicholò won't be there, for some months ago I gave him permission to leave (gli mandai la licentia). Moreover, he has written to me that those kings (of Spain and Portugal?) are fully occupied with the African expedition.' Fra Girolamo replied: 'They must first attend to this affair.' In the end I promised to write . . . and so I took my leave. In the evening Fra Girolamo sent me, by a friar whom I did not know, the draft of which he had spoken, with a copy of the letter to the Pope. I made two copies of them, and sent them by different ways to Nicholò. This matter I never revealed to any one, for Fra Girolamo had communicated it to me in confession."[2]

Del Nero's letter to his brother has also come down to us, and has been published by Villari.[3] It is almost entirely similar to that of Mazzinghi, given above. The only points of difference are that it is rather shorter, the passage about the chosen servant of God being omitted, and that the writer asserts more explicitly than Mazzinghi that "the Father aforesaid" has been "inspired by God" to write to the princes of Christendom.

III. *Political Intrigues.*—Of far less real importance than the question of the efforts made to secure the convocation of a Council was the charge that Savonarola and his brethren had habitually engaged in intrigues connected with secular and local politics. On this point it must be admitted on all hands that the replies of the

[1] It is given by Villari, *loc. cit.*, pp. cclxiv.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. cclxxii. *See* above, p. 325.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. lxviii.

witnesses are such as completely to clear the community as a whole, and Fra Girolamo in particular, from the imputation of having done anything seriously blameworthy. One after another the deponents declare that they know nothing of any "pratiche," or "intelligentie," or "inbasciate" of a political nature, on the part of the inmates of the convent, with the sole exception, as will be seen, of Fra Salvestro. For the most part, they emphatically declare that they frequented S. Marco solely for religious purposes. For instance, Piero Cinozzi, the father or uncle of that Fra Placido Cinozzi to whose brief record of Savonarola's career we have so often had occasion to refer, deposes as follows:—

"As every one knows, I have a son at S. Marco, and I have none other, and he is my only treasure (tutto el mio bene), and likewise two cousins and a nephew; and whenever I could do so, I spent my time there, and I had a (private) key. And when there was any business to be done for the convent I used to do it, and I knew all the brethren. And when I had said my office, which it was my delight to do (detto ched io avevo el mio officio, la mia gioia), I used to spend part of my time in the convent garden with a lay-brother (chon uno chomverso, *sic*) called Fra Pellegrino, conversing with him; and I used also frequently to talk with Fra Girolamo himself about divine things (e anchora favellavo chon Frate Girolamo ispeso *delle cose di messere Dominedio*); and never did I speak with him about the election of magistrates, or other political matters (mai parlai chollin di dare officio, o di intelligienza). In fact, when I went to the convent on the day on which the Signory was to be chosen, he would not allow me to enter (non vole ched io emtrassi demtro, *sic*), sending word to me that he did not wish people to be able to say that any kind of political negotiations were being carried on there (che cholà si faciessi intelligienza). I was present at many processions and devotions, especially at one which was held on 7th January 1497 (*i.e.* 1498), which lasted from about one o'clock till seven (*i.e.* from about 7 P.M. till midnight, reckoning, after the Italian fashion, from sunset). And on this, and on every other occasion on which I have visited S. Marco, I never saw nor do I know of anything but what was good; and you will never get any other answer from me but this, which is the truth."[1]

More explicitly he says that, being consulted by his cousin Girolamo Cinozzi, as to the candidates for whom it would be well to vote in the election of the Signory, the only reply he made was, "God will inspire you." The answer shows how extremely careful

[1] "E in questo sie e inn ongni altra chosa ched io mi sono trovato, in San Marco, non ò veduto nè ne so se none tutto bene; e mai si troverrà chom verità di me, altro" (p. ccxxxviii). The above paragraph bears the heading: "Sopra la praticha avevo in Sammarcho."

it was necessary to be in order to avoid all suspicion of political machinations, and how dangerous a form of industry wire-pulling was felt to be at Florence in those days. But it also shows how thoroughly the lessons inculcated by Savonarola had been imbibed by his more faithful disciples. In the sermons which he delivered in 1494 and 1495, while the Florentine constitution was in process of formation, he had strenuously protested against every form of canvassing in view of the elections, had insisted that it was the duty of electors to choose their candidate on strictly conscientious principles, and had advised the electors when, for want of knowledge of affairs, they were unable to arrive at any decision in their own minds, to cast lots, after prayer, for the name of him for whom they would vote. An election so made he assured them, would have the blessing of God, and would even deserve to be regarded as the election of God Himself.[1] And it is, perhaps, in this sense that we are to understand his strange assertion that, in certain contingencies, white beans would be by divine agency changed into black for the carrying out of God's holy will. Nor is there any reason whatever to doubt the assertion made in his own deposition, and assuredly not interpolated by the notary, that, as far as possible, he refrained from forming acquaintances among the politicians of the city, of whose very names he was, in many cases, completely ignorant.

Unfortunately, Fra Salvestro did not share his superior's prudence in this regard, and there can be little doubt that notwithstanding all Fra Girolamo's warnings, he played the part of a busybody, and became the centre of a good deal of political gossip. The only conclusion which can be drawn from the whole body of evidence would seem to be that while the lobbying of Fra Salvestro did no serious harm to any one but himself, his brethren, and his friends, it did succeed in bringing upon the convent and its frequenters just those suspicions which Savonarola was most desirous to avoid. And it is painful to find that on occasion of the trial Salvestro appears to have accused at least one of the victims of his own indiscretion. The very last item in the evidence of Piero Cinozzi, an item not in his own handwriting, is to the following effect:—

Item, on 27th April, 1498, at the Bargello, under [the torture of] the stanghetta (*i.e.* the boot)—

The said Piero, being again interrogated on sundry points, confessed

[1] Villari and Casanova, *Scelta*, p. 208.

that he had said to Fra Salvestro that he would not vote for any one who did not believe in the Friar. And this he confessed in presence of Fra Salvestro, *who declared that he had said it several times*. And he (Piero) said: "I do not remember it, but be it so (io non mia ne ricordo, ma sia decto)."[1]

It only remains, so far as this point is concerned, to give *seriatim* the shreds of evidence on which the conclusions above stated are based.

Lionello Boni said:—

"As for political intrigues (intelligienza) I assure you that I took no part in anything of the kind; and when the magistrates were to be elected, the course which I followed was to pray to God that He would inspire me so that I might know for whom to vote. As for my dealings with S. Marco, I used to go in the morning to Mass, and when the service (l'uficio, presumably None) was over I used to go home. Then I would return to Vespers, and when I had finished my office I went away 'a mia chonsolazione.' This was on feast days (*i.e.* Sundays and holidays); on work days I stayed in my shop. . . . I repeat that I held no dealings with Fra Girolamo, because, as I have already said, after service I went away to my own affairs (a fare e' fatti mia). Of letters, messages, or commissions (inbasciate) I know nothing."[2]

Francesco Davanzati deposed that:—

When elections were pending he used sometimes to converse with F. S. (*i.e.* Fra Salvestro), F. B. Cavalcanti, and others, as to who would be suitable candidates. And sometimes they would fix upon a name, as for instance that of Filippo Buondelmonte, when he was made Gonfaloniere. But for the most part, Ruberto Ridolfi and he himself said no more than this: "May God of His grace give us a good Signory," or a good Board of Eight, and this was said with a purely patriotic motive. "As for revealing the names of the newly-elected Signori before they had been published, of this [he says] I know nothing. But I remember that when I was myself elected, the fact of my election was made known to me the evening before the public promulgation. And in the morning I went to Mass, and I found Fra Salvestro, and I told him that I expected to be one of the Signori, and asked his prayers. Then he took me to Fra Girolamo, and I said the same to him. And this was the first time I ever spoke to him, and I wish to God I had never known him." . . .[3]

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[1] Villari, ii. Append. p. cxxxix. Here we have, of course, the hand of the notary. But it would seem that here, at least, he is recording an avowal which was actually extorted; for, had he wished to lie, he might easily have put into Cinozzi's mouth a more compromising admission.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. ccxliii *sqq.*

[3] "E Die 'l volesi ch' io nollo avesi mai chonociuto" (p. ccxlviii). It is just possible that the words may mean, "I wish I had never known *it*," viz. the act of his election as made known to him before the proper time.

Later, 27th April, he admits that in voting he showed some favour to "quelli del Frate."[1]

Fra Ruberto Ubaldini da Gagliano writes:—

"For what concerns confessions, I have acted with all simplicity (sono ito puramente), treating therein of nothing but what appertained to matters of conscience. Neither did any one on such occasions seek to draw me into political discussions, nor would I have suffered them to do so. One morning Giovanni Minerbetti, having heard a sermon of Fra Girolamo's, in which the preacher had spoken of a plot to establish a despotism in the city, asked me what grounds there were for such an apprehension. . . . I told him that I had heard Fra Girolamo say that he did not believe such machinations would succeed. . . . Whereby he was reassured and comforted. And on another occasion, some time ago, Andrea Larioni wished to speak with Fra Girolamo, and, as he could not see him, charged me to ask him whether Piero Capponi was ill-disposed towards the Consiglio . . . for that he and others had been asked by him to do certain things of which they dreaded the issue. Fra Girolamo answered that he knew nothing against Capponi, but much in his favour; but that Larioni ought to proceed cautiously, and to consider whether what he was asked to do were good or evil . . . and to act accordingly. This I repeated to him. As for other "pratiche" I remember none. . . . And whereas I was constantly in Fra Girolamo's company, I never saw any signs of his engaging in political intrigues, nor do I believe that he took part in anything of the kind.

"And in fact *Fra Girolamo knew the names of but few of the citizens*, and had but little personal acquaintance with them. *But it was Fra Silvestro who had always a group of them about him*, whether in his cell (piena la cella) or in the cloister or in the garden, a circumstance which greatly annoyed the rest of us." [Here follows a long list of names of those with whom Salvestro habitually conversed.][2]

In the deposition of Domenico Mazzinghi we read:—

"As for showing favour to one rather than to another in the elections I never troubled myself about such matters. It is true that sometimes when the Gonfaloniere di Guistizia was to be appointed, Fra Salvestro and I, with occasionally another friend or two, used to say: 'So-and-so would be a good man.' But who they were among whom such things were said I do not now remember. Nor do I remember that Fra Girolamo ever recommended to me any persons who desired to be employed in military service, except in the case of one man, a native of Ferrara; and in this case no more was said or done in the matter."[3]

Baldo Inghirlami is at pains to explain that in his dealings with certain ecclesiastical personages who were suspected of political

[1] Villari, ii. Append. pp. ccxlv, ccxlviii, ccxlix.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. cclx *sqq.* (slightly abridged).
[3] *Ibid.*, p. cclxiii.

designs, he, as a member of the Eight, had merely carried out the orders of the Signory, or acted in his official capacity. Nor did Fra Girolamo ever say a word to him on the subject; and he is surprised that the Friar should now avow having done so. This is, perhaps, the only case in which we can detect the use to which the falsified confession of Savonarola was put, in any matter of detail. As for secret informations conveyed to S. Marco, or any canvassing there, he knows nothing. And whereas he used to know beforehand, presumably in his official capacity, the names of the newly-elected Signory, he never by word or sign made them known to any one; nor when he was himself one of the Signory, did he ever go to S. Marco. When he did go there it was solely to hear the sermons, or to assist at Mass, or to make his confession; never for political reasons, but only for his soul's good. And as for his alleged use of the back door of the convent, he has a brother staying with him who has a wife and family, all of whom frequented S. Marco for confession. And when some of them were ill, it happened occasionally that the friars would come to visit them, and would use the back door of the convent which opened on the Via della Stufa, "for their convenience, just as we did ourselves . . . and all for a good purpose."[1]

The deposition of Andrea Cambini is in large measure concerned with a description of the character and methods of action of Francesco Valori, to whom indeed Cambini had acted as a kind of agent-general. Valori, he says, was warmly attached to the popular form of government, which, however, in his opinion, needed some modifications. Piero de' Medici he regarded with extreme hatred ("hodio incomportabile"), and this feeling, together with his naturally suspicious nature, rendered him a man with whom it was exceedingly difficult to deal ("nel praticare era salvatico e difficile"). But strong as were Valori's political convictions, Cambini calls God to witness that he never knew him to engage in secret intrigues of any kind. The witness speaks at some length concerning Valori's varying relations with Soderini, Giambattista Ridolfi, Francesco Gualterotti, Antonio Canigiani, and others. But whereas he was suspected of a design to gain power for himself, he always disclaimed the intention of making himself the head of a party.

"Towards Fra Hyeronimo (*sic*), and the whole convent of S. Marco, he (Valori) showed the greatest possible affection, and showed that he placed the fullest confidence (tucta la fede sua) in them; and he declared

[1] Villari, ii. Append. pp. cclxix *sqq*.

that on their behalf he was ready to do anything ; and whenever any debate arose which concerned them, he always used to send me to give them notice of it ; and in like manner when they were in need of anything they used to send word to him by me, and he would help and advise them. And he often assured me that so great was the reverence in which he held Fra Hyeronimo that it would go sorely against his conscience to disturb him by a visit, or even to cause him to be disturbed on his account (che si farebbe gran coscientia a richiederlo, o fargli dire o fare cosa alcuna a stanza sua). And I do not remember that he ever charged me with any message concerning public affairs.[1] It is true that quite recently, when the suppression of the sermons was under debate, M. Francesco Gualterotti and he commissioned me to go and tell Fra H. that it was the intention of the Signory to suspend him from preaching, and that they were of opinion that he would do well to desist of his own accord ; and they begged him to let him know what his intention was. He replied that he would await the prohibition of the Signory, and would not voluntarily cease to preach. So too, last year, on the eve of Ascension Day, when there was a discussion (altercatione) as to whether he should be allowed to preach or no, Valori sent me to enquire whether he was determined to preach. He replied that he was ; and on the conclusion of the debate he sent him word that the Signory had determined that he might preach on the following day, and that therefore he could do so without risk." [2]

The deponent admits that when Valori was to be succeeded as Gonfaloniere by Bernardo del Nero, Valori informed him of the fact, and that he told Fra Salvestro, Niccolò Ridolfi, and others, in order that they might inform Bernardo himself, who was at his country seat. So, too, he made known to Fra Salvestro the names, as he had heard them, of those who were elected Signori with Giuliano Salviati, though in this case it turned out that he was mistaken as to many of the names. As to secret negotiations of Valori with other citizens he knows nothing. He believes however, that on one occasion he went with Niccolò Machiavelli and Tommaso Guidetti to visit Francesco della Scarfa. And he often used to visit Antonio Canigiani when the latter was ill ; and twice he called upon Soderini, the Bishop of Arezzo.

" Once he (Valori) took a paper from his desk and showed me a long list of some 300 names, saying : 'If we should have occasion to organise a party (usare inteligentia) these would be our friends, but I don't intend

[1] If the reader will note, in this and other depositions, the kind of exceptions which are made to the general statement, he will probably be more fully convinced than by the general statements themselves, of the groundlessness of the accusation that the friars of S. Marco mingled in political affairs.

[2] Villari, ii. Append. pp. cclxxv *sqq*.

to attempt anything of the kind, or to make myself a party leader (farmi capo).' And so he put away the list, and I never heard of it again. . . . On another occasion Berto da Filicaja drew him aside and talked with him for awhile. And when he was gone, Valori told me he had spoken of the necessity of organising the party, adding that he had bidden him betake himself to Soderini and Ridolfi, for that he had no mind to be the chief of a faction (non mi voglio fare stendardiere).

"A fortnight since, Fra Silvestro showed me a note (una poliza) which one of the friars had received, and which contained some assurance on the part of Tommaso Capponi that all would shortly be well with us, and so forth. I took it to Valori who thought it ought to be shown to the Ten. But I would not undertake to do this, and so I tore it up."[1]

These trifling details at least serve to show how extremely careful the best friends of Fra Girolamo were to avoid even the semblance of any action that could be misconstrued as an act of disloyalty to the city. The witness proceeds to recount how Salvestro was accustomed to give him notice as often as he heard of any danger which seemed to threaten Valori, and how he himself endeavoured to allay the suspicions with which Valori was regarded, and how he would sometimes speak in his favour even to those who were not frequenters of S. Marco. And on the other hand, in speaking with those who were almost infatuated with their love of S. Marco ("che sapevo non legevono altro libro") he would say a word in favour of Corsini, Buondelmonte, or Scarfa, assuring them that though these men were not devotees of the convent, still they were good citizens, who, if they were elected, would serve the republic faithfully. And after this fashion he strove to promote peace and goodwill on all sides.[2]

Of secret understandings or intrigues in the convent he knows nothing, nor was any effort made by the friars or their friends to confine the government offices exclusively to one party. But in familiar conversations among themselves, as election day drew near, it naturally happened that they would discuss the merits of the various candidates, and that they were disposed to vote for those who seemed likely to promote the public welfare, as they conceived it. But the witness repeats that if he was questioned by men of little knowledge or experience concerning the qualities of men who were not adherents of the Friar (*e.g.* Buondelmonte and the others named above), he would speak in their praise.[3]

[1] Villari, ii. Append. pp. cclxxvi *sqq*.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. cclxxviii *sqq*.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. cclxxix *sqq*.

In his second examination (27th April) he admits that towards the end of Valori's term of office, knowing that his friend was desirous that Antonio Canigiani should be his successor, he communicated this wish to Fra Salvestro, in the hope that Salvestro would use his influence on behalf of Antonio. And on another occasion, when Fra Salvestro hoped that one Giovanni di Dino might be chosen Gonfaloniere, Cambini suggested that they should support Scarfa instead, as Giovanni had no chance. And yet again, when Valori hoped that Corsini might be elected, Cambini told Salvestro of this also. Moreover, he once spoke to Fra Girolamo about Valori, in the hopes that the Friar might find some opportunity of helping to mitigate the odium which Valori had incurred in connection with the execution of Bernardo del Nero. On the occasion of his embassy to Giovanni Bentivoglio, at Bologna, the witness declares that he fulfilled his commission of treating with him about business matters, that in further conversation he spoke highly of the present form of government, and that when Bentivoglio asked him what the Friar was about, he had replied that the Friar attended to his preaching and his prayers, while the citizens attended to the government of the city. And this, with the admission that he was occasionally rallied as the holder of all Valori's secrets, is the sum and substance of Cambini's evidence as bearing in the alleged political action of the friars of S. Marco, and on the behaviour of the most powerful among Savonarola's friends and supporters.[1]

IV. *The "subscription," or joint letter.*—A topic which seems to have greatly exercised the minds of the examiners, and to which, as has been seen, constant reference was made in the debates on the trial, was the joint letter to the Pope in favour of Savonarola. It was written, as has been seen, in the summer of 1497, and signed by some 350 citizens, but was never forwarded to its destination. The chief witness on this subject is Fra Ruberto Ubaldini, who was employed to see the business through. This is, with the omission of a few superfluous phrases, the account which he gives of the matter.

"I hereby attest that in the month of June or July 1497 (for I cannot recall the precise date), I was charged to send to the Pope, in the name of the brethren of the Congregation of S. Marco, an attestation in favour of Fra Hieronymo da Ferrara, at that time Vicar of the said Congregation, setting forth that—whereas he had been excommunicated on the ground that he had preached erroneous and pernicious doctrine, which

[1] Villari, ii. Append. pp. cclxxxi *sqq.*

savoured of heresy—he was neither a heretic nor a seditious person, and that his doctrine was neither pernicious or calculated to breed dissension, but rather to promote union and peace; and that, accordingly, we prayed his Holiness to absolve the aforesaid Fra Hieronymo. And in case the signatures of about 250 of the brethren should not be deemed sufficient, we offered him those of a great number of good and noble citizens; and that if even this were not enough we could procure not merely hundreds but thousands of additional names. The notaries, Ser Benedecto da Ferrarossa and Ser Filippo Cioni, my friends, knowing that I wrote a good hand, instructed me to write the particulars above mentioned on fine paper: and I suppose that they had been asked to take the matter in hand (et loro haveano ad essere rogati).

"And after Messer Francesco Valori, and Messer Domenico Bonsi, and Messer Francesco da Iesio had signed, Fra Silvestro charged me diligently to attend to the taking of the signatures; and I accepted the commission, and supervised the affair, remaining for the purpose in the guest-house. All was done in the presence of Ser Benedecto or Ser Filippo aforesaid, or of both of them, or of some one else, religious or secular, in their stead; and I would read the document to those who came to sign it, and to some I dictated what they should write, while others preferred to sign after their own fashion, and I allowed them to do as they pleased.

"And whereas it happened that some signed their names in my unavoidable absence, among whom were certain persons of no position (che erano persone ignobili), as for instance, certain barbers and clerks. . . . Fra Silvestro reproved me for this, saying that I must take care that, according to the terms of the letter, only respectable persons and gentlemen (huomini da bene et nobili) signed it, and that those names of persons of no consideration were not to the purpose. Accordingly, I sent many persons away, and would not allow them to sign. But afterwards I reflected that offence might be taken (che si dovessino scandalezzare), and so I allowed all sorts of people to put down their names. Some, as they signed, exclaimed: 'This is as true as the Gospel (questo è il Vangelio di S. Giovanni); I will bring so-and-so.' And then they went and brought others—or failed to do so, as the case might be (chi sì et chi nò). And I myself sent for certain of my relatives and friends who would not come—for instance, G. Cerretani, Gh. Altoviti, G. Buongirolami, and others whose names I have forgotten. But some came, and signed the letter. I did this because it seemed right, and even a matter of obligation, to bear testimony to the truth. . . . Some said they would bring certain of the adversaries of Fra Girolamo. I remember that Piero delli Albizzi said he would bring Piero delli Alberti, who promised to come, but did not. There was talk of bringing Alphonso Strozi, and Jacopo di Tanay (de' Nerli), and Philippo Giugni, but it was thought doubtful whether, if they came, their signatures would be accepted. I said they would be most welcome, and that we should receive them in all charity. However, they did not come. But Jacopo Stiattesi

(Schiattesi) came, and others whom we should never have expected. Others came, but would not sign—for instance, Antonio Giraldi, Luca delli Albizi [and others who are named]. Others, again, who came were at first unwilling to sign, but were talked over by Fra Silvestro and Fra Domenico. Agnolo Niccolini was sent for, but would not sign, for he disapproved of the form of the letter, which he thought would do no good, and altogether seemed undecided.[1] Giuliano Salviati, though sent for, would not sign, to the best of my recollection. Fra Cosimo Tornabuoni sent for Lorenzo (his relative), and the latter professed indignation that he had not been asked sooner. He wrote his name, but apart from the rest.

"The affair was never brought to a conclusion, because the pestilence attacked the convent just at that time. Andrea Cambini was commissioned to mention the matter to Francesco Valori, and I afterwards understood from Andrea that Francesco replied that the letter (with the signatures) ought to be burnt, and no copy taken, and that on no account ought it to be sent to Rome. When I told this to Fra Girolamo, he did not seem to make much account of it; and I suppose it was from inadvertence that the matter rested so.

"In acting as I did, I thought I was doing right, and I did it out of obedience, not merely to Fra Silvestro, but also to Fra Hieronymo. For he, on hearing that I had the matter in hand, was well satisfied that I should have the management of it, because I was acquainted with so many (perchè havevo notitia delli huomini)."[2]

It is curious that Valori, who certainly at first approved of the letter, and had been the first to sign it, should afterwards have expressed himself as he is here said to have done. The only explanation seems to be that he did not like the list of names; either because the obscure condition of some of the signatories made the affair a little ridiculous, or (as is perhaps more probable) because he did not care to find himself in the same boat with men like Tornabuoni and Pucci, whom, in fact, he himself brought to the gallows within a very few weeks.

To this full, true, and particular account of the matter the other witnesses have little to add. Fra Salvestro, however, mentions how the affair came to be set on foot, and entirely confirms Ubaldini's evidence. It was understood, he says, at S. Marco, that a joint letter, signed by many citizens, and full of calumnious accusations against Fra Girolamo, had been sent to Rome, and it was thought

[1] The sentence is so obscure that we have contented ourselves with a very general paraphrase. The matter is of interest only because Agnolo Niccolini stood almost alone among the more prominent politicians of the time in raising his voice in favour of Fra Girolamo in the days of his downfall.

[2] Villari, ii. Append. pp. cclv *sqq*.

well that a counter-manifesto should be prepared. Accordingly, the two notaries, Ser Filippo and Ser Benedetto, were sent for, and the matter was put into the hands of Fra Ruberto. The deponents mention the refusal of certain of the citizens to sign the memorial; they said it was a thing got up at the instance of Valori; and Luca degli Albizzi warned Salvestro that it was a dangerous business, alleging the case of a similar joint letter, written in 1466, which had turned out badly. Some of the most determined supporters of Savonarola, *e.g.* Francesco del Pugliese and J. and A. Salviati, misliked the affair greatly, but said that, as it had been set on foot, they would put their names to the letter.[1]

Andrea Cambini explains that the origin of the whole affair was a letter from Bracci to his son-in-law, Ser Bastiano, or one of the Mannelli, from which the brethren of S. Marco had learned that a manifesto, hostile to Fra Girolamo, was believed (at Rome) to be in preparation. They consulted Valori and Ridolfi, who approved the scheme of a letter in the Friar's defence. It was brought to Valori for signature, and Cambini likewise signed it; but he made little account of it, and never enquired what became of it, "because it was signed by all sorts of people, seculars, religious, and foreigners."[2] He says nothing, however, of any change of mind on the part of Valori concerning the letter.

V. *The affair of the Ordeal.*—For the sake of completeness we set down here the account which Fra Domenico gave, at the trial, of his own part in this business. Fra Girolamo's version of the story, as given by Ceccone, will be found in the next chapter.

"It is [says Domenico] the demon who has put it into men's minds that I was guilty of sin in carrying (or rather, in proposing to carry) the Sacred Host into the fire. I am certain that I should not have been burnt; and therefore there would have been no scandal, but rather the people would have been edified; and according the devil was angry.

"But when I shall stand in the presence of Christ I will make it clear to all the people whether in this matter I acted of my own accord, or by the will and interior movement of God, who willed it so. Nor is it necessary that every one should understand why He so willed it; but let him who does not understand this say to himself: 'I do not understand it'; and let him not be scandalised or murmur. But all the works of Christ are as 'a sign that shall be spoken against.' It is enough for me that I came to the spot determined by all means to enter (the fire), nor did I apprehend that any objection would be raised (nè mai pensai d'

[1] Villari, ii. Append. p. ccxxii. [2] *Ibid.*, p. cclxxiv.

havere a essere appuntato) concerning the Sacred Host ; because I knew that although, even without the Host, God would have delivered me, yet in fact He willed that I should act as I did. I thought indeed that many, who are no friends of God, would derive no profit from the miracle, but would certainly attribute it to the Sacred Host, which (they would allege) could not burn ; as if the species of the Sacrament could not burn, though this has often happened. . . . A thousand Hosts would not save a man from the fire if he had not the truth on his side."[1]

We cannot take leave of Fra Domenico without a tribute to his character and to his bearing under examination. A man of deep piety, of most earnest zeal, and of transparent simplicity, he only needed wiser guidance to have become a model of religious virtue. Among all the depositions at the trial of Savonarola none approaches that of Fra Domenico in simple dignity. It commences with the words :—

"God and our Lord Jesus Christ knoweth that I, Fra Domenico, a prisoner for His sake, do lie in nothing that is here set down."[2]

And at the end of its first section, after a fresh protestation that he has spoken the truth without reserve, the writer concludes :—

"I pray your good lordships (vostre Benignità) not to twist my words after a sophistical fashion, for your wisdom is aware that words ought to be understood according to the intention of him who uses them, to the glory of the God of all truth. May He inspire you to believe me, and to do in my regard the will of Him who is blessed for ever. Amen."[3]

A little later he writes :—

"There is nothing else that I remember ; if you wish to learn anything else from me, question me like good confessors, and I will do my best to satisfy you. But believe all I say, and this you may well do ; for having always had a tender conscience, I know very well that it is a sin to tell a lie in court, or to keep back what ought to be made known. I have tried throughout to act as if I were about to die forthwith, which indeed may well happen, if you torture me. For I am quite broken down and have lost the use of both my arms, especially the left one, 'el quale con questa, già due volte, ho guasto.' Wherefore, I pray you, deal gently with me, and believe the truth of this my simple writing."[4]

And again :—

"Suffer me, honourable citizens, to recommend to you your miserable prisoner, from whom, since the first torment of the rope, you have

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[1] Villari, ii. Append. pp. ccv *sqq.*
[2] *Ibid.*, p. cxcix.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. ccvi *sqq.*
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. ccxiv *sqq.*

learned nothing of importance, for he has lived a simple life, and has not busied himself in your affairs, but only in preaching . . . what pertains to a virtuous life and to the honour of Jesus Christ, the King of Florence. And so by this second application of the rope, if indeed in your distrust of me you should administer it, you will not learn anything fresh, for there is nothing to tell: and you will put me in danger of death. Let God's will be done."[1]

The whole deposition concludes with the words: "In simplicitate cordis mei letus obtuli universa."

[1] Villari, ii. Append. p. ccxvi. Villari adds: "Pare che, in questi ultimi momenti, la tortura venisse spesso (?) ripetuta."

CHAPTER XXIII

THE EXAMINATION OF FRA GIROLAMO

TOWARDS the close of that section of his *History of the Popes* in which he deals with the career of Savonarola, Dr Pastor writes :—

"It is plain that Savonarola's statements, forced from him by torture, and further distorted by interpolated sentences and omissions, cannot be accepted as proofs of anything. Thus the justice of his sentence can never be either proved or disproved."[1]

Yet, however much we may distrust the employment of torture, as a means of eliciting the truth, the historian cannot afford entirely to pass over such documents as the depositions of prisoners or witnesses even though they have been taken under such conditions. They must be received, of course, with reserve; but where a number of witnesses agree, even under stress of so barbarous a mode of examination, the evidence clearly cannot be set aside as altogether valueless.

It may of course be urged that where, in a case where not only has torture been employed, but a falsifier has also been at work, a deposition ceases to have any importance whatever; and this consideration had all but determined us to pass over entirely the three processes of Fra Girolamo himself, and to confine our attention to the genuine or substantially genuine documents which have occupied the bulk of the preceding chapter. Having regard, however, to the minute account given by Vivoli and Fra Benedetto of the manner in which Ser Ceccone fulfilled his nefarious task, it has seemed to us that a very fair notion may be gathered of what Savonarola really said, and that what he did say is of sufficient interest to find a place in such a biography as the present.

[1] Pastor, vi. 48.

This, then, in a somewhat condensed form, is what Vivoli tells us :—

"The only genuine deposition of Fra Girolamo was that which he wrote with his own hand, and which afterwards came into the hands of Giovanni Berlinghieri, one of the Signory, who showed it to several persons but would never let any one read it [and which, after Berlinghieri's death, was destroyed].[1] In fact, these wicked men (the Signory) seeing that they could not get out of Fra Hieronimo anything that could justify them in having laid violent hands on him, and seeing, on the other hand, that the people were impatiently murmuring against themselves, concocted in great haste a summary process (fabbricorno cosi in fretta fretta un processo falso di poche carte) taken, as was said at the time, partly from his written deposition, but with certain additions (postille) here and there (in più luoghi) which quite perverted all that Fra Girolamo had said, and which were said to have been made by Ser Cecchone, who acted as secretary to the examiners. This done, they caused the falsified process to be printed. But soon afterwards these men, so wise according to the wisdom of this world, perceived that they had put forth a document which proved nothing (di poco fondamento), and which had been compiled with scant prudence ; and therefore orders were issued that all copies should be returned to the printer within a few hours. . . . But Botticello (*i.e.* Simone Filipepi) relates in his chronicle that he did not return his own copy, and I have myself seen the document."[2]

This account of the matter, which is confirmed by Fra Benedetto, is certainly not such as ought to inspire any high degree of confidence in the published process. There were discrepancies, according to both writers, not only between what Fra Girolamo said or wrote, and what Ceccone took down in his notes, but also between what the notary first wrote and the official copy which was made for the Signory and preserved in the State archives, and again between the official manuscript copy and the printed report. Fra Girolamo's written deposition neither Vivoli nor Benedetto had seen. But Ceccone's notes had come into the possession of a certain Jacopo Mannelli, a canon of the cathedral, and an adherent of Savonarola, who had them from Ceccone's widow. In Mannelli's house

[1] The destruction of the document is vouched for, not by Vivoli, who, on the contrary, says that some believed it to be still in existence (Villari, ii. Append. p. cxiii), but by Fra Benedetto (p. cxxxiii). The latter says that Piero degli Alberti persuaded Madonna Berlinghieri to burn or destroy the papers after her husband's death. According to Cinozzi (pp. 27-28) and Vivoli (*loc. cit.*), Berlinghieri declared that the publication of these papers would have led to the death of forty (Cinozzi says 400) citizens ; whether as bringing them within reach of the law, or as exposing them to popular hatred, does not appear.

[2] Villari, *loc. cit.*, p. cxiv.

Benedetto had read them, and so, it would seem, had Vivoli, and both of them appear to have had access to the government archives.[1]

However, notwithstanding all these grounds for mistrust, we are convinced that the three documents which make up the process, and which are given in full by Villari in his Appendix, are very far indeed from being without historical value. The recorded answers of Savonarola to the interrogatory administered to him touch upon a multitude of points concerning which the notary had no motive for tampering with the evidence, or in which, if he had chosen to improve upon it, he might easily have given it a more seriously incriminating character. Moreover, both Vivoli and Benedetto proceed to set forth, by way of specimen, some of the particulars in which Ceccone had altered the record; and although they professedly give but a few instances out of many, we may feel sure that they selected those which seemed to them to be the most noteworthy. Now, of these specified alterations all, or nearly all, have reference not to overt acts but to the motives and intentions whereby Savonarola was guided. Here, then, we seem to have a rule provided for our own guidance. Where the report speaks of motives and intentions it is to be regarded as—in detail at least—entirely untrustworthy; but not so when it deals with external and tangible facts. Yet again, even as regards Fra Girolamo's alleged admission that he was actuated by unworthy motives, that he deceived the people, and so forth, it must be borne in mind that even such enthusiastic admirers and devoted adherents of the Friar as Vivoli and Fra Benedetto do not hesitate to admit that Savonarola, believing that he was justified in dealing craftily with a crafty adversary, not only made use of ambiguous and misleading expressions—for which no one, it may be presumed, would blame him overmuch—but told downright falsehoods; for which proceeding Vivoli is at considerable pains to excuse him.

[1] Benedetto, p. cxxxv; Vivoli, pp. cxvii. It is Benedetto alone who mentions that Ceccone's notes were in the possession of Mannelli. For purposes of literary convenience we have spoken of Vivoli and Benedetto as though they were independent witnesses. But it is doubtful whether they ought in all cases to be so regarded. The *Giornate* of Vivoli and the *Vulnera Diligentis* of Benedetto are both cast in the form of a dialogue; and although the "Soffia" of the *Giornate* and the "Agricola" of the *Vulnera Diligentis* no doubt represent in a general way the respective writers, it is obvious that in such a form of composition the author might attribute even to the chief among his *dramatis personæ*, knowledge and experience which were not his own. We very strongly suspect that in many instances Benedetto has borrowed from Vivoli, or *vice versa*.

Of Fra Girolamo's use of ambiguous expressions the most notable instance is his repeated assertion that he did or said this or that "for glory," meaning, as Vivoli explains, that he spoke and acted 'for the glory of God"; whereas Ceccone filled out the phrase and made him confess that he sought in all things his own honour and reputation. This was just the sort of trick which was calculated to impose on the credulous and to destroy the good name of the prophet; though it can hardly be supposed that his actual condemnation was based on this false imputation of unworthy motives.

But if we may trust the memory of Fra Benedetto, Savonarola by no means stopped short at the use of ambiguous language. Professing, as he does, to have read the original record of the examination before Romolino—a document which Romolino carried off with him to Rome, and of which only a summary "fatto sub brevità" by Ceccone remained at Florence—this is the account which he gives of the matter:—

"In this final process, whereof I have had the original in my hands . . . I found that Fra Hieronymo, being bound, in preparation for the torture, declared with a loud voice that all those things which he had preached and foretold *in verbo Domini* were true and not false, and that he was ready to give his life for them; and he spoke with great warmth (molto vivamente) to this effect. Notwithstanding this, the papal commissaries, making little account of (non apprezando) his words, had him hoisted on the rope and most cruelly tortured him.[1] And he, *seeing that they did not wish to hear the truth, began to change his utterances, without however changing his mind* (in cominciò a mutare vocaboli, ma non sententia), *pretending to be what he was not*; pretending, I say, yet without lying, *nam fingere licet sed non per duplicitatem*. . . . And take note that this method of first declaring the truth and then concealing it was adopted by Fra Hieronymo on every occasion on which he was put to the torture . . . which occasions were many during the course of the forty-five days during which they held him prisoner."[2]

It is quite unnecessary to follow Vivoli through his long apology for Savonarola's prevarication—if the term be not too strong—on this occasion. The most liberal allowance must of course be made for a man reduced to such extremities; and without excusing the line which he adopted, we certainly have no wish to press the matter against him as though he had been guilty herein of grievous sin.

[1] This only partially agrees with, but may perhaps throw some light on, an obscure passage which will hereafter be quoted from the third process as summarised by Ceccone, *infra*, pp. 423, *sqq*.

[2] Villari, *loc. cit.*, p. cxxxv.

The notion that he was at liberty to say and unsay (ridire) the same thing again and again, without incurring the guilt of a formal lie, is perhaps best accounted as of a piece with his other delusions. It is hardly the line of conduct which we usually associate with the idea of a martyr. As to the fact there can, we take it, be no manner of reasonable doubt. The friends of Fra Girolamo eagerly gathered up every shred of information, every damning admission, which subsequently escaped the incautious lips of those who had been engaged in the trial. But while many of them are said to have declared that he had done nothing worthy of punishment, and while Doffo Spini himself is said to have declared that had he known Fra Girolamo sooner he would have been his fervent disciple, no attempt is made to call in question the truth of the allegation that his account of his own motives, and of the nature—divine or human, genuine or pretended—of his revelations and visions, was by no means uniform and consistent throughout.

We now give in brief the substance of the first process, such as it has come down to us, noting here and there, at the foot of the page, the instances in which Vivoli explicitly bears witness that the deponent's words were maliciously altered by the notary.

"About fifteen years ago, being one day in the monastery of S. Giorgio, during my first stay at Florence, I set myself to compose a sermon. And there occurred to me about seven reasons for believing that some scourge of the Church was imminent. On this subject I preached at S. Gimignano during two successive years, and afterwards at Brescia and many other places in Lombardy. On my return to Florence I commenced to expound the Apocalypse at S. Marco, on 1st August 1490, and there, and at S. Liberata, in the following year, I spoke on the same theme, not professing to have any revelation on the subject, but urging all the reasons that I could.[1] After the following Easter Fra Silvestro told me that whereas he had doubted concerning the things which I said, and had thought me mad, one of our deceased brethren had appeared to him and reproved him for thinking so of me; and thereafter he had many similar visions as he told me himself.[2] And so . . . I felt myself impelled to affirm these things more positively than I had yet done, although, in fact, they were

[1] There is no doubt that 1490 is the correct date. In the *Compendium Revelationum* he writes 1489, but this is certainly an error, for 1st August fell on a Sunday not in 1489, but in 1490. *See* above, p. 26, and *note* 1 *ibid.*

[2] This is confirmed in substance by the deposition of Fra Salvestro. We find the name written Silvestro in the first process, but Salvestro in the third. There can be no reasonable doubt that the latter was the name by which he was familiarly known. Hence we have used it throughout, except in quotations.

my own inventions.[1] And seeing that the affair prospered, and that my reputation with the people was on the increase, I began to say that I had these things by revelation. And very often I repeated things which Fra Silvestro told me, deeming them to be true; nevertheless, I did not converse with God nor God with me in any special manner, as He is wont to speak to His holy apostles or the prophets.[2] Afterwards I became so intoxicated with these things that I declared myself to be more certain of them than that I was in the pulpit, or that two and two make four. And this I said in order to strengthen my hearers in their belief. And so things went on till 1494. And when the new form of government had been established in that year, I affirmed my conclusions (le cose mie) with still more vehemence, not only 'per gloria,' but because I wanted to promote this affair of the government of Florence, and this both for my own reputation and also in order to have things my own way and to gain power. And so I affirmed that Pisa would be recovered. So, too, I was not really certain that I could work a miracle or supernatural sign, though I affirmed that one would be shown at the proper time and place.

"As for Fra Silvestro's visions, I did not really care about them, but I pretended to do so because they served my purposes. And if his visions suited my intentions (mi venivano al proposito) I would ascribe them to myself."[3]

The deposition continues for some time in this strain, but it is

[1] The last clause is printed within brackets by Villari (p. cl), as a manifest interpolation of the notary's. But the same might probably be said of what follows.

[2] This is one of the instances in which Vivoli (or Vivoli's "Soffia") declares that Ceccone has maliciously altered the record. According to this authority, what Savonarola really said was to this effect: "This (question about prophecy) is not a matter which concerns the civil government (non è caso di Stato); whether I am a true prophet or not God will show. Other prophets have been brought to a worse plight than that in which I now am" (*ibid.*, p. cxviii). Apart from external testimony, the weight of which must in this case be allowed to be considerable, intrinsic probability is all on the side of the answer attributed to Savonarola by Vivoli. A little later, when once more questioned about his prophetic mission, Fra Girolamo is said to have replied: "This it does not concern you to know. Moreover, if I say Yes (*i.e.* that I am a prophet) you will not believe me, and if I say No, I should be telling a falsehood." Yet again, Vivoli declares that according to Ceccone's first draft of the process, Fra Girolamo said: "Since you constrain me, I declare that God speaks to me by word of mouth . . . and I to Him." And he further declared that God appeared to him in visible form, "e che egli è un angelo." And yet again he declared that God spoke to him with the voice of a man. And being asked in what form God appeared to him, he replied: "Like a boy of about fifteen years of age, clad sometimes in white, sometimes in red, or some other colour" (p. cxix). Once more, Vivoli accuses Ceccone of having maliciously suppressed the words used by Savonarola in speaking of his work of moral reformation: "Let it be; if it be of God, He will give a manifest sign; but if it be of man it will fall" (p. cxx).

[3] That he actually did so is attested by Fra Domenico. (*See* above, p. 387).

unnecessary to reproduce the whole of what he is made to say, for it is this part of his evidence which most clearly shows the manipulation of the notary. At the same time it is to be remembered that, as has been already said, even Vivoli and Benedetto agree that Savonarola freely used equivocation in speaking of his visions; and that both of them undertake to justify him.[1] That he showed considerable vacillation when interrogated on this subject at the later stages of the trial is beyond dispute, and there is no *à priori* ground for asserting with confidence that he showed an unshaken firmness, even at the outset, in the maintenance of his divine mission.

The deponent then goes on to speak of his political action in the years 1494-95. He admits that he favoured the establishment of the Great Council, the law of appeal, and the abolition of the Parlamento. But this was already clear from his published sermons, and his alleged admission that all this was done from motives of personal ambition deserves no credit.[2] He declares that it was he who, against the wish of Valori, procured the resignation of the Accoppiatori, having persuaded Giuliano Salviati, and afterwards Domenico Bonsi, to set an example to the rest by voluntarily laying down their office.

He next speaks of his desire that Valori should gain power, for he was convinced that no union of citizens could last long without a head, and he thought no man more suitable for a chief, "maxime credendo non si potere fare tyranno." But he had great difficulty in persuading others of his political followers, *e.g.* G. B. Ridolfi, the brothers Salviati, Luca degli Albizzi, and one or two more, to accept Valori's leadership. His idea was to pave the way for a constitution more thoroughly like the Venetian, with a Doge or Gonfaloniere for life. This was the position which he had hoped to gain for Valori.[3] Nevertheless, he always entertained some fear lest the chiefs of the party should attempt to form a "governo stretto," and for this reason he often preached against this kind of polity. His plans on this and similar matters, however, he always kept to

[1] Vivoli, *loc. cit.*, pp. cxxii; Benedetto, p. cxxxv, pp. cxxxvii *sqq.*

[2] Here again, Vivoli accuses Ceccone of having suppressed Savonarola's assertion (quite inconsistent as it is with the alleged admission above referred to) that "he had the design of the Great Council from Him who speaks to him in the manner aforesaid" (p. cxx).

[3] All this may well be a pure invention of those who hated the memory of Valori.

himself, or spoke of them only to his most intimate friends, Domenico, Silvestro, and Fra Niccolò da Milano.

But he took no part in any political intrigues ("intelligentie") for the advance of any party, or for the purpose of influencing the elections. He merely in his sermons laid down general principles of government. As regards the details of politics, he considered that laymen, and especially Valori, Soderini, and Ridolfi, understood them better than himself. Indeed, they never consulted him about details, but in a general way they used his name and authority to enable them to carry their measures. It may be due to Ceccone that he is made to say that in all this he had a great regard for his own reputation, and that therefore, when there was any business to be transacted with laymen, he for the most part employed Fra Salvestro, or some other, keeping in the background himself. So, too, it would not be safe to lay stress on the admission that whereas many came to S. Marco out of devotion, many also came from political motives, viz., that they might be known, or believed to be, adherents of "the Friar," and thereby advance themselves.

He has been accustomed to use as intermediaries Andrea Cambini, Piero Cinozzi, Girolamo Benivieni, Francesco Davanzati, Carlo Strozzi, and two or three others. Nearly all his dealings with Valori were by means of Cambini.[1] The chief men of the party were, Valori, Bonsi, Gualterotti, Ridolfi, Soderini, Mazzinghi, and some eight or ten others who are named. The names of their followers may be found in the paper of signatures to the joint letter, which was left in his desk at S. Marco.

"I rarely spoke with Valori, but he constantly sent me messages by Cambini. He was very ambitious, and though I wished him to have power, I was distressed at his rough manners, which alienated all his friends (che era huomo da scacciare tutti i suoi amici)."

The deponent never attempted to secure the election of any individual citizen, for he did not know them well enough. But in general terms he preached that good citizens should be chosen. When, however, any particular person was recommended to him by his brethren as likely to be favourable to the cause ("che fusse buono all opera nostra") he would take occasion to speak well of such an one to the citizens who frequented S. Marco. And so, too, he would do in the case of those with whom he was personally acquainted, Valori, Soderini, and the rest.

[1] This is entirely confirmed by Cambini's deposition (*see* above, pp. 398 *sqq.*).

The only occasion on which he remembers to have more directly shown favour to an individual candidate was when Francesco Scarsi (Scarfa?) came to ask for prayers that he might be elected one of the Ten; and after the election he came to thank Fra Girolamo for the prayers.

To the question what correspondence of a political nature he had had with foreign princes or lords, Savonarola replies:—

"When the King of France was on his return, I wrote him three or four letters exhorting him to restore what belonged to Florence, and also to come back to Italy; telling him that if he did not do this it would fare ill with him. I sent him a similar message through Nicolao Alamanni on occasion of his first visit to France, and I have sent sundry messages to the same effect by Frenchmen who passed through Florence on their return to their own country. But the King never paid any attention to these messages, nor ever sent a reply by letter or by word of mouth. So that on occasion of Alamanni's later journeys I sent no message by him; and in fact I did not trust him, nor did I think him the kind of man who would be likely to have access to the King.

"A certain Fra Lodovico once came to me, and told me in very guarded language that the Pope wanted the Florentines to send him an ambassador, or to write him 'qualche buona lettera'; and he tried hard to induce me to persuade the people to think favourably of the Pope (et molto mi stringera affare opera che il populo stesse edificato a la via del Papa). I told him that I had no power to act in such matters, as Lorenzo or Piero might have done, and I referred him to Franceso Valori, Piero Filippo (Pandolfini), and Pagolo Antonio (Soderini); and after that I heard no more of him.

"Messer Luisi Tornaboni once suggested to me to enter into relations with the 'prefectissa' of Sinigaglia, saying that this lady was well informed concerning French affairs. Fearing some snare (dubitava dinganno, *sic*) I referred him to Valori, and heard no more about it.

"When the Cardinal of Bourges (Brissonnet) passed through Florence I spoke to him, and begged him to solicit the king to return to Italy and to restore her possessions to Florence. I gave a like message to Filippo Lorini (mandai F. L. in Francia), but this was done with the knowledge of the Ten who were then in office.

"Carlo Orsini and Vitellozo (*sic*) Vitelli, on their return from France, called at S. Marco, and urged me to do what I could for the king. They came to me as if I had been 'il Signore della terra.' I told them that I would pray for the king, and that I was well disposed to do all I could for him."[1]

Here follow some paragraphs, of no special interest, concerning Savonarola's dealings (1) with various Frenchmen and Neapolitans,

[1] Villari, *loc. cit.*, pp. clix *sqq.*

(2) with Messer Dolce da Spuleto (*sic*), (3) with the Count Checcho da Montedoglio, and (4) with Messer Agamemnon da Marescotti, formerly Podestà of Brescia.[1] He admits that at the instance of Fra Niccolò da Milano he interceded with Valori on behalf of Ercole Bentivoglio, who had been engaged by the republic as condottiere, but was in danger of losing his employment. Details such as these, though not of great importance, are at least not likely to have been invented by the notary.[2]

"To the Dukes of Ferrara and Milan I have written on spiritual matters (circa al ben vivere), but not on affairs of policy. Nor did I trouble myself about the employment of condottieri, except that I occasionally suggested to Valori or Mazzinghi the name of one or another, *e.g.* one of the d'Esti of Ferrara, Christophano da Gonzaga, and one of the Rangoni of Modena. But this I did in quite general terms, saying: 'So-and-so would like employment (vorebbe essere conducto), do what you think best.'"

After another paragraph on city politics, which is of no special interest, the deposition proceeds:—

"As for my alleged disobedience to the Pope, and my refusal to go to Rome, my reason was that I feared that I should be killed on the way, or at Rome, either by (the followers of) Piero de' Medici or by (the adherents of) the League; for I was hostile to their designs.

"Concerning the excommunication, I say that although many believed it to be of no effect, nevertheless, I believed it to be valid, and that it ought to be respected (da observarla), and I did respect it for awhile; but afterwards, seeing that my work was going to ruin, I determined to resist it, and did so by word and deed. And to this course I obstinately adhered 'per honore et riputazione et mantenimento dell' opera mia.'[3]

"As regards the sermon on Septuagesima, 11th February, I declare that I waited for the letters of Messer D. Bonsi—I mean those which he wrote to the Signory and to myself, signifying that the Pope was not disposed to allow me to preach. On this I, of my own accord, and because I saw that my work was being spoiled, determined to recommence the sermons. . . . And to this I was not urged by any of the citizens in particular. In fact, my friends, *e.g.* A. and J. Salviati and D. Mazzinghi, were opposed to this (sene dolsene, *sic*). It is true, however, that some of those who frequented S. Marco used to ask me when I was going to

[1] Villari, *loc. cit.*, pp. clx *sqq.*

[2] A passage about Marcuccio Salviati and Giovanni della Vecchia has been given above (p. 340, *note*), and need not be repeated here.

[3] Villari, *loc. cit.*, pp. cxlii *sqq.* This admission would be important were it not that this is just one of the passages in which there is only too much ground for suspecting that Ceccone has distorted what was actually said.

preach again, saying that they were dying of hunger (*i.e.* of spiritual hunger). And I remember that Jacopo di Dini came to me at S. Domenico (*i.e.* at Fiesole) and asked me when the benches were to be got ready. But I would not tell him; and, indeed, it was my habit not to make known beforehand the precise day on which I proposed to preach.

"The reason why I left S. Liberata the second day in Lent was not that I wished to obey the Pope, but for fear lest I should be killed, and after I had once commenced to preach (poi che io fui conducto a predicare) at S. Marco, I persevered in doing so notwithstanding Ser Alessandro Bracci's letter of 3rd March. . . .

"As touching my correspondence with ambassadors, I declare that I have on sundry occasions written to Giovacchin Guasconi urging him to urge the king to return to Italy . . . and I used every effort to induce him 'che dilà tenesse le cose calde'; and this I did because I knew that Bishop Soderini (of Arezzo) was writing in a contrary sense ('scriveva freddo') . . . Occasionally, too, Guasconi wrote to me. But he constantly wrote to his son, and the latter would show me the letters, and I would advise him how to reply."[1]

He has had two letters from Bonsi, one of warning and one of reproof; and two from Bracci, full of encouragement. Moreover, the last-named ambassador constantly communicated with him through his son-in-law Bastiano da Firenzuola ("et tutto si cominciava con Francesco Valori"). Ricciardo Becchi likewise wrote to his brother concerning the affairs of Fra Girolamo, but he had no confidence in Messer Ricciardo.

The deponent next speaks of a foolish plot, or rather design, for the murder of Bernardo del Nero, by throwing him out of the window of the Palazzo. This design seems to have had its origin in a revelation which the reputed prophetess, Camilla Rucellai, imagined herself to have received. She made it known to Fra Malatesta, and bade him consult Savonarola, who replied that he ought to know what sort of an answer to make to such a question. It is true that he encouraged his political friends to resist any attempt at innovation which Bernardo might make during his term of office, but he had nothing to do with any plot for his murder.

"With Piero de' Medici I never had any dealings (of a political character), for I was strongly opposed to him; and . . . when the King of France, on his return from Naples, would have restored him 'as a citizen' to Florence, I urged him to do no such thing (disputai con il Re che non lo facesse). It is true that my friend Dino di Dino wrote from Rome that Piero was minded to amend his life, and would be glad of my advice. I replied that Piero was seeking to implicate me in his affairs

[1] Villari, *loc. cit.*, pp. clxiii *sqq.*

(voleva appicchare la pratica meco), and that I would have no dealings with him beyond prayer for him." [1]

On another occasion some one, unknown to Fra Girolamo, came to him and sought to interest him in Piero's welfare. But "this nightbird" ("questo tale nocturno") came only once, and got no answer but that Fra Girolamo did not think that Piero would ever return. Nor had he ever any dealings with the Cardinal de' Medici, except once about some matter of property. The following sentence, which can hardly be other than genuine, is worthy of note:—

"I declare that if Piero had returned, I would have told him what I had said in my sermons (about him, and would have said): 'I did it for a good purpose, and at a time when you were not in power; had you been in power I would not have preached against you, but would have spoken of vice in general terms.'" [2]

After one or two passages concerning Pisa, and about other matters of minor importance, Savonarola is made to say that in his expressions concerning the turning of the key, and the opening of the casket, his object had been to strike terror into his adversaries; that his alleged vision in the octave day of the Anunciation had been a mere invention, which he had concocted "stando nella libreria greca di S. Marco"; that his intention in seeking the separation from the Lombard Congregation had been to secure greater liberty for himself; and that various alleged visions and dark sayings of his had been pure inventions. On such points as these it is obviously impossible to feel any confidence that his words have been correctly reported.

As for his prediction that "many barbers," or barbarians, should come to invade Italy, that the Church should be renovated, and the Turks converted, these things he believes to be true, because he finds ground enough for such predictions in Holy Scripture; but he has had no special revelation on the subject. So at least he is made to declare.

"The 'subscription,' or joint letter, drawn up at S. Marco was not of my contriving. It was set on foot by my brethren; but I was pleased with it, for it both testified and promoted union among the citizens." [3]

"It occasionally happened that Fra Silvestro made known to me the names of the newly-elected Signory before they were made public. But

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[1] Villari, *loc. cit.*, p. clxv. [2] *Ibid.*, p. clxvi. [3] *Ibid.*, p. clxix.

he did not tell me from whom he had them ; and I did not make much account of the matter." [1]

He comes now to the all-important question of the part which he had taken in endeavouring to secure the assembly of a General Council. And here there seems to be little reason to suppose that his evidence has been tampered with. At any rate, the account of the matter which he gives is tolerably plain and straightforward.

"I declare that I felt great indignation against the Roman court, because they had persecuted me for having reproved them ; and, moreover, by reason of their vicious life, I was minded to endeavour to procure the calling of a Council. Accordingly, I had determined to cause five letters to be written by various persons whereby five kings should be exhorted to take this matter in hand. The tenor of these letters was as follows : That it seemed right that the sovereign princes should be informed of the state of affairs here ; that there was a preacher here who predicted things to come, and deplored the vices of the Church, and declared that he could confirm his conclusions by valid reasons ; that this preacher had himself written a letter to the Pope (a copy of which letter may be found in my desk, or else Fra Niccolò da Milano has it) ; and that they, being the heads of Christendom, ought to make provision for the redress of such abuses, and to convoke a Council. These letters [to be written by other persons at Fra Girolamo's suggestion] were intended to prepare the minds of the kings. But I had also determined to write to each of them myself to the same effect. And I had already prepared a rough draft of the letters, which ought to be in my desk ; and in each of them was to be enclosed a copy of the letter which I had written to the Pope. The kings to whom I had written these letters were : the Emperor, the King of France, the King of Spain, the King of England, and the King of Hungary. I employed Giovanni Cambi to write to the Emperor. Domenicho Mazzinghi was to write in his own name to Giovachin Guascon (*sic*), a letter which was to be shown to the king of France ; Simone del Nero was to write to his brother Niccolò, for the benefit of the King of Spain ; the affair of the English letter was entrusted to Francesco del Pugliese, who had an English friend at Florence whom he was to persuade to write ; and the letter intended for Hungary I sent to Madonna la Minuta at Ferrara, and to a friend of mine there. The drafts of these various letters I sent to the several persons named by means of Fra Niccolò da Milano, and I suppose he still has copies of them." [2]

After a few words, probably distorted by the notary, concerning the motives which had led to the writing of these letters, the deponent proceeds to say that among his own brethren no one knew of the

[1] Villari, *loc. cit.*, p. clxx.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. clxx *sqq.*

affair except Salvestro, Domenico, and Niccolò da Milano. Among the laity, besides the persons already named, no one knew of it except Girolamo Benivieni.

Then comes the remarkable passage in which he is made to say that his purpose was "to do great things in Italy, and beyond Italy, with the help of the princes (Signori) with whom I had made friends." The Council having done its work, he would have exhorted these princes "to conquer the infidels (a soggiogare glinfedeli)." As for making himself Cardinal or Pope, he had no great mind for that; for if he should succeed in carrying through so great a work without being either Cardinal or Pope, he would be the first man in the world. If, indeed, he had been chosen Pope he would not have refused the office; but to carry such a work into effect was a greater thing than to be Pope, "for a man devoid of virtue can be Pope; but such a work requires a man 'di excellente virtù.'"[1]

It is certainly true that he employed a great many confessors at S. Marco, and strongly exhorted men to confession, and was glad to see a great concourse of people thus, but quite untrue that he sought to know what had been told in confession.

"As to the ordeal by fire, I declare that I deeply regretted (hebbi per male molto) Fra Domenico's action in provoking the affair, and I would have paid a great sum rather than that he should have done it. I was grieved too that my friends urged the matter on. If I consented to it I did so for the defence of my honour. Had I been preaching at the time I should have done my best to put a stop to the business by showing that the 'conclusions' could be proved by natural reasons. And I reproved Fra Domenico for having thus brought me into a position of great difficulty and danger. However, in the end I consented, in order not to lose my reputation; but I always said that we undertook this ordeal as men who had been challenged. I fully believed that the Franciscan would not enter the fire, and, if he did not enter it, our man would not be bound to go in. But if he should go in, our man would have to go in too. And so I wished that he should go in with the Sacred Host, in the hopes that this would save him from being burnt; and except under this condition I would not have allowed him to go. This point I discussed on two occasions, before the day of the Cimento, with G. B. Ridolfi. Ridolfi told me the Franciscan would never go in, and that is what I myself believed."[2]

Then, in a passage from which we have already quoted, Savonarola goes on to say that he had taken measures to make the arrange-

[1] Villari, *loc. cit.*, pp. clxxi *sqq.*

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. clxxii *sqq.*

ments as terrible as possible, in order that the Franciscan might be frightened. He would not indeed have allowed that his friends should interrupt the proceedings, for, had he done this, he must have lost all his reputation by showing that he was afraid of the ordeal; but his chief hope (il mio principale fondamento) was, that the Franciscans would be afraid, and he did his best to secure this.

Vivoli is at great pains to show that Fra Girolamo's words on this subject have been misreported. He declares that, in his genuine replies to the interrogatory, Fra Girolamo had declared his unshaken conviction that Domenico would not have been burnt; that he came to the ordeal with the full determination to see it through; and that his intention had been, not indeed to allow the Franciscan to be burnt to death, but to let him have a good roasting ("*lasciarlo un po' cuocere*").[1] It is plain enough that the full truth on this subject can never be ascertained, and quite uncertain how far Savonarola's dislike of the whole affair really made him doubtful of the result.

At the close of this first process occurs what professes to be a copy of Savonarola's attestation that all that is above written is true. But Benedetto explicitly affirms that his genuine subscription contained a protest against the "postille" which had been added by the hand of Ser Ceccone.[2] In addition to which it is to be remembered that the published deposition is not a faithful copy, but a summary made "in fretta fretta" of that garbled document which he thus signed under protest. At the same time, it may be worth while to repeat once more that even these enthusiastic admirers of one whom they regarded as a prophet and a martyr do not maintain that the deposition as a whole is a pure and simple forgery; and there are plenty of statements occurring therein which afford no ground whatever for suspecting any substantial alteration of the deponent's words.

The second process, which, as has been said, adds nothing of importance to the first, and which would only weary the reader, need not here detain us. It may be found, by any one who cares to look for it, in Villari. The third examination, however, viz. that which was conducted by Romolino as papal commissary, has a more tragic interest. It differs from the two earlier processes in that it is given in the form of question and answer; and this renders easier its reproduction in a condensed form.

The ghastly details concerning the application of the torture

[1] Vivoli, *ibid.*, pp. cxx *sqq.*

[2] Benedetto, *ibid.*, p. cxxxvi.

which occur in this third process are, indeed, such as we would willingly omit. But were we to pass them over in silence, we should rightly be held to have failed to give a plain, unvarnished account of the records which have come down to us. The particulars of an examination under torture must of necessity be gruesome; but we who live in a milder and happier age must be on our guard against charging with personal inhumanity every one who was concerned in the administration of a system which, to us, appears simply abhorrent. The principles which underlay and were supposed to guide the application of torture were these:—

(1) That no man could be legally convicted until he had confessed his guilt; a principle derived from the Roman law.

(2) That in the interests of the commonweal it was eminently desirable, in the case of a grave criminal charge, to elicit not merely a general avowal of guilt, but, as far as possible, the whole truth.

(3) That the only sure means of eliciting the whole truth was the use of torture. But——

(4) That torture could be applied to an accused person only when there was—in the language of the courts—a *semi-plena probatio* of his guilt, *i.e.* when his guilt was already established by circumstantial evidence. Moreover, it could then be inflicted only under certain restrictions—which, it must be confessed, were not always observed—as to the degree of severity which might be exercised. Savonarola himself, we repeat, had gone out of his way to advocate in the pulpit the use of torture. On the hypothesis of his guilt, which his examiners considered as established by notorious facts, he was being treated in accordance with his own principles.

After a recital of the names and titles of the commissaries and their assessors, the document proceeds:—

Messer Francesco Romolino above named asked by word of mouth: Is all that you have said and confessed to my lords here, and to which you have put your name, true? And did you confess it *sine tortura?*

Savonarola: It is true.[1]

[1] The actual record gives question and answer in the third person, and in the narrative form. In reproducing the substance of it we have adopted that of direct dialogue. As regards the question: "Did you confess *sine tortura?*" it must be remembered that, in the language of the courts, a confession was said to have been made "*sine tortura*," provided that the deponent subsequently ratified what had first been extorted from him by rope or rack. This, Savonarola had, under protest, and with limitations, already done. But once more Ceccone suppresses the protest which Fra Girolamo made (now as before) against the garbling of his deposition.

R. As regards these matters, have you had any dealings with other ecclesiastical persons besides those named in your confession?

S. Having repented of my sins, I now declare in God's presence—and may He strike me dead if I do not tell the truth—that I never communicated these things to any one except the three Friars, Domenico, Salvestro, and Niccolò. Though I did not venture to hope with confidence that I could bring about the Council, I strove to do so, but I never confided my designs to any but these three, and to the persons whom I charged to write the letters, to whom I communicated the matter "in confession."

R. Have you had any dealings with princes; and which of them did you trust, and why?

S. I had no dealings with any of the princes of Italy, because I regarded them all as my enemies.[1] But I had some hopes of the King of France, because I had spoken with him; and of the Emperor, because I had heard that he could easily be won over; and of the King of Spain, because I had heard that he was hostile to the Court (of Rome) and to its abuses; and of the King of England (Henry VII.), because I had heard that he was a good man. Of the King of Hungary I knew nothing. But my chief hopes were in the three first named.

R. What Cardinals were your friends, and what dealings have you had with them?

S. I considered the Cardinal of Naples as my friend, but I did not place much confidence in him. For although it was by his means that we obtained the separation from Lombardy, yet this was brought about at the instance of Piero de' Medici. Subsequently, after Piero's departure, I understood that he, and the Cardinal his brother, had prejudiced him (Caraffa) against me. Of late, I have had no dealings with him nor with any other Cardinal. Jacopo Mannelli assured me that the Cardinal of Lisbon was well disposed, but I had no dealings with him. Nor did I ever treat with M. Filino (Sandeo) for he was hostile to me, as you may learn from the Ferrarese envoy, and from Ser Alessandro (Bracci).

R. Did Fra Domenico or Fra Salvestro reveal to you matters heard in confession?

S. No; and in fact Domenico used not to hear confessions.

R. And what about your non-observance of the excommunication?

S. Herein I sinned, and I pray for mercy.

R. Did you say that the Pope was not a Christian, had not been baptised, and was no true Pope?

S. I never said so, but I had in my cell a letter which I had written, in which this was said. But I never published it, and have burned it.[2]

Having commanded that he should tell the whole truth, and nothing

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[1] It is to be presumed that he could have made an exception in favour of Ercole d'Este of Ferrara.

[2] He had, however, given copies of it to Mazzinghi and the others whom he had employed to write the letters which have already been mentioned.

but the truth, Romolino ordered that he should be stripped for the rope. He then, overcome by fear, threw himself on his knees and said, "Now, hear me. O God Thou hast caught me (tu mi ha colto), I confess that I have denied Christ, I have told lies. My Lords of Florence, bear me witness that I have denied Him for fear of the torture; if I must suffer, I will suffer for the truth: that which I have said I have had from God. O God grant that I may repent of having denied Thee for fear of the torture. I deserve it." Then he was stripped; and once more he knelt down . . . and repeatedly said: "I have denied Thee, O God, from fear of the torture." Being drawn up (by the rope) he cried: "Jesus, help me! this time Thou hast caught me."

Being asked, as he hung by the rope, why he had spoken thus, he replied: "That I might be thought a good man (per parere buono). Do not torment me, I will tell you the truth, for sure, for sure."

The answer, "per parere buono," is certainly obscure in its context. The idea seems to be that Fra Girolamo admitted that he had made false statements under stress of torture, in the hope that the torture would not be applied again; but that, this device having failed, he had now tried to make his judges believe that, being a man inspired by God, they ought not to lay hands on him. But Fra Benedetto declares, as the reader may remember, that this part of the process has been shamefully distorted, and that Savonarola, at the outset, maintained with great constancy, and not "with great fear," the truth of his revelation.

R. Why did you just now deny what you had confessed?

S. Because I am a fool.

Being let down, he said: "When I see the tortures, I lose my self-control (mi perdo); but when I am in a room with a few men who deal peaceably with me I can express myself better."

R. The process which has been drawn up, is it true?

S. It is all true; and I will ever confess it to be so.

R. Why, then, did you just now deny it?

S. I said it because I thought you would perhaps be afraid to lay hands upon me.

This answer confirms the explanation suggested above. It is, however, an explanation rather of what the compilers of the report wished its readers to believe, than of what Savonarola actually said. As to his actual words it is, of course, impossible to be certain.

R. Did Fra Salvestro reveal men's confessions to you?

S. Never, in detail; but it may be that in general terms he has told me something which he has heard in this way, but without ever saying

that it was so. For the rest, in order to know the affairs of Florence, there was no need that Salvestro should reveal men's confessions, for I had other means of knowing all that went on.

R. How so?

S. Especially by means of Salvestro, who had many dealings with the citizens, by whose means, apart from confession, he could learn what was passing. Yet I did not confide much in Salvestro, nor even in Domenico, in such matters, for they were apt to betray secrets; especially Fra Salvestro, who was very talkative (molto largo), and whom I regarded as an inconsiderate and not a very good man; whereas I believed Domenico to be good and sincere. I was myself the greatest sinner among them. . . .

The last two questions and answers seem to call for a word of comment. Lest it should be concluded from them that the revelation of sins declared in sacramental confession was regarded as *per se* antecedently probable—which it was certainly not—it must be borne in mind that a specific accusation on this head had been made against Savonarola by his enemies. That this calumny had been diligently circulated in Rome and at Milan, and probably elsewhere, appears from the fashion in which Burchardus and Sanudo refer to the matter in their respective diaries, viz. as a thing about which there could be no dispute.[1] It is probable enough that Romolino was unduly credulous, and that he really suspected Fra Girolamo of this sacrilegious wickedness. And this is enough to account for the question having been asked, and for its repetition, in a modified form, a little later in the examination. As regards Savonarola's answer, it might be enough to say that we do not really know what answer he really made. But if he really said, as Ceccone reports, that Salvestro might have told him (not that he had told him) in general terms matters which he had learned in confession, then we must understand the matters in question to have been, not the individual sins of individual sinners, but such general circumstances as, for instance, the prevalence of this or that vice in the city. In the absence of any shred of real evidence we should be sorry to charge the memory of Salvestro with so much as the suspicion that he was ever guilty of such imprudence. But Fra Girolamo may have thought him capable of it. We repeat, however, that no one knows what Fra Girolamo actually said on the subject. This much, however, we do know, viz. that the expression "in confession" was habitually used by Fra Girolamo and his companions in a very loose and inaccurate sense,

[1] Burchardus, *Diarium, Romanum* (Ed. Thuasne), ii. 73; Sanudo, *Diario Veneto*, iv. 279.

as covering even political secrets communicated "in confidence." But to return to the interrogatory, as reported by the notary :—

R. Have you in your sermons used vituperative language concerning the Pope?

S. I have never spoken of the Pope by name, but I have made use of such expressions as to make it evident that I alluded to him.

R. Is it true that you did not observe the excommunication?

S. It is true.

R. Is it true that Domenico and Salvestro used to reveal confession one to another?

S. Domenico did not hear confessions and therefore could not reveal them. But it is true that sometimes he pumped (stuzzicava) Salvestro to get secrets out of him, though he never asked him in so many words to reveal matters of confession, for this would have been to betray himself.[1]

R. Did you write letters in contempt of the Pope, and for the purpose of procuring a Council?

S. I did not write such letters, but I induced others to write them. But it is only recently that I have thought of this matter. It was not others who instigated me to this, it was I who instigated them.

R. What good did you think you would do? And did you not see what a scandal you would cause?

S. It was all the result of my pride and my folly.

R. Did you cause dissensions in the city by your preaching; and did you favour your own faction?

S. It is true that I favoured my own party; but I never encouraged murder.

R. What about the five citizens who suffered death last August?

S. I was content that they should be punished with death or exile; but I did not interfere in the matter, beyond interceding with Valori, though not very warmly (ma freddamente), on behalf of Lorenzo Tornabuoni.

On the second day of the examination before the Papal Commissioners, Savonarola, being asked concerning the truth of what he had heretofore confessed, is said to have replied to the following effect.

"Monsignore, what I said yesterday by way of denial (of my former admissions) I said like a man beside himself (passionato), and because I wished to extricate myself from such an extremity of distress (da una gran briga); for these bodily sufferings are such that the very sight of them affects me more than tortures of the rope would affect another man. All that was written, and that I signed, at my first and second examinations was true; and I have to thank my fellow-citizens that they dealt mildly with me; and if at the outset I did not tell the truth, this was because I

[1] Some questions on matters all of slight importance, or on matters already dealt with, are here omitted, and will be omitted hereafter.

wished to conceal my pride. But seeing how gently they dealt with me I determined to tell the whole truth. . . . I have been a wicked man, and now I wish to clear my conscience, and will declare everything as fully as I can."

This alleged speech, it may be observed, carries on its very surface the marks of falsification; for in the published examination it is precisely at the outset that Savonarola most explicitly admits his "pride"; and the fulsome flattery of those who had dealt so "gently" with him is in flat contradiction with what the notary had set down a few pages previously, viz. that when he was stripped, by order of Romolino, he showed his left arm which had been rendered powerless ("guasto") by the violence of the torture. It was just in the case of a comparatively long address like this that Ser Ceccone had the fullest scope for the exercise of a talent which seems to have been as clumsily as it was maliciously used. No wonder that, as Burlamacchi and Landucci relate, this infamous notary was mulcted of more than nine-tenths of his promised pay.[1]

R. What dealings have you had with women as concerning their supposed revelations?

S. At first I used to converse with women, and learned things from them, which I afterwards put forth as revelations. But of late I have avoided all intercourse with them. The persons from whom I had such things were Ma. Vaggia Bisdomini, Ma. Camilla Ruciellai, Ma. Bartolomea Gianfigliazi, but to the last named I paid little heed, for she seemed to me mad.

R. Is it true that you made your brethren hear confessions, and absolve and communicate the faithful, notwithstanding the excommunication, and that you allowed those who had been excommunicated on your account to die (without being reconciled to the Church)?

S. It is true.

Once more he is asked "con minaccie di fune" concerning the affair of the Council, being urged to tell the whole truth. Then, says the record, he exclaimed:—

"O Brother, to what a pass art thou come!" And he began to weep and mourn, and to say: "When I think how I came to enter on this affair, I cannot but grieve over it; and I know not how I came to begin it, but it seems to me like a dream." And then he began to tell the story as follows:—

"This matter of the Council I began to take in hand not more than three months ago. . . . And when I began to consider how I should

[1] He had been promised 400 ducats, but received only 30, or, as Fra Benedetto says, 33 (Villari, ii. 204).

bring it about, I said to myself: I cannot gain over Italy; at Venice I have no interest; Naples is weak; the Florentines are divided; the Cardinals are not to be trusted, they would reveal everything to the Pope. And so I looked beyond Italy to France," etc.

He then speaks of the attempts which he made to enter into relations with the Cardinal of San Piero in Vincoli (della Rovere) and the Bishop of S. Malo (Brissonet), but to little purpose. He knew neither of them personally. He had some hopes of the Cardinal of Naples, and had written to him in the hopes of gaining his goodwill as a first step, but not explicitly about the Council. Moreover, he had held some conversation with one Michelangiolo da Orvieto, a dependant of his, about the prospects of a Council. He had also, through Bracci and his son-in-law, Ser Bastiano, had a letter from Napoli urging him, in general and guarded terms, "to kindle the fire." Here—obviously with the design of implicating Caraffa in the business—he was either threatened with the rope, or actually tortured again, but nothing further could be got from him on the subject, or at least nothing of any importance. The remaining questions, with their replies, are of no special interest.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE END

"THE vain efforts of the Papal commissaries," says Villari, "had only succeeded in making more evident the innocence of Savonarola." For our part, we cannot take this view of the matter. They had not, indeed, drawn from him any confession that he had formally taught heretical doctrine. And no wonder; for among those who had either heard or read his sermons, there could be no question as to the orthodoxy of his ordinary dogmatic teaching.[1] When he was asked whether he had professed or inculcated this or that error on points of faith, his answer was, that to suspect him of such absurdities was to charge him with being a fool. Whether his admission—made, retracted, and made again—that he had fraudulently usurped the name and office of a prophet, or again his persistent refusal to submit the exercise of his alleged prophetic mission to the judgment of his ecclesiastical superiors, could rightly be regarded as amounting to constructive heresy, and as deserving of the penalty of death even in accordance with the jurisprudence of the age, may be called in question; though it would seem that these things were in fact so regarded under stress of the strong feelings which prevailed at the time. But on one point—or rather on two points very closely connected with each other—there can be no doubt whatever. He had endeavoured to procure the deposition of the Pope, by means of a General Council, to be convoked by temporal sovereigns; and herein lay the head and front of his

[1] The doctrinal orthodoxy of Savonarola was declared by the commission appointed to examine his works in 1554 under Paul IV. The *Dyalogus de Veritate Prophetica* was, however, placed on the Index, with about a dozen of Savonarola's sermons. A full account of the proceedings is given in Quétif, ii. 561. It has seemed quite unnecessary to discuss in these pages the views of those modern writers who have represented Savonarola as a precursor of the Reformation. The question has been ably dealt with by Father Procter, O.P., in a tract published by the Catholic Truth Society in 1894.

offending.[1] This being so, it seems to us to be a mere perversion of the truth to say, with Villari, that the result of the trial from its inception to its close had been to bring the innocence of Savonarola into an even clearer light. The Papal commissioners sat to try, not—in the first instance—his conscience, but his acts. His acts were, as necessarily viewed by them, a direct and flagrant contravention of the well-known Bull *Execrabilis* of Pius II., which explicitly condemns an appeal from the Pope to a General Council.[2] And therefore they amounted to constructive heresy and schism, as well as to "contempt of the Holy See," the three counts on which the sentence of condemnation was explicitly based.[3]

Savonarola would of course have said that in fact his conduct involved no such contravention of the Bull; that Pius II. speaks of an appeal from a lawful Pope, but that Alexander was not a lawful Pope; that his simoniacal election had been invalid from the outset, and that it could be only provisionally revalidated by his subsequent recognition at the hands of Christendom; and finally, that his unchristian life, subsequently to his election, amounted not merely to constructive heresy, but to constructive infidelity.[4] Every student of ecclesiastical history is aware that in 1505 Julius II., the all but immediate successor of Alexander VI., decreed by his Bull, *Cum tam divino*, that for the time to come a

[1] Cum in ea, quam dedi, vita P. Hieronymi Savonarolae (*i.e.* Burlamacchi's) legatur, intentatam fuisse adversus illum capitis causam *quod seculares Principes ad procurandum generale concilium adversus Alexandrum VI. per literas instigasset*," etc. So writes Mansi (in Baluze, *Misscellanea*, i. 583), and although he is professedly giving the view of Burlamacchi, it is easy to see that he himself regarded this as the main charge against Savonarola. Mansi was Archbishop of Lucca in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

[2] "Execrabilis, et pristinis temporibus inauditus tempestate nostra inolevit abusus, ut a Romano Pontifice, Jesu Christi Vicario . . . nonnulli spiritu rebellionis imbuti . . . ad futurum Concilium provocare præsumant, quod quantum sacris Canonibus adversetur, quantumque Reipublicae Christianae noxium sit, quisquis non ignarus jurium intelligere potest," etc. (*Bullarium Romanum*, Ed. Coquelines, v. 97). The Bull is dated 28th January 1459. In a later Bull, *In minoribus agentes* (26th April 1463, *ibid.*, p. 100) Pius II. retracts certain opinions concerning the authority of General Councils which he had maintained in his earlier days, long before his election to the Papacy.

[3] "(Furono) dannati tutti a tre per heretici, scismatici, et contemptori della Sede Apostolica" (The Ten to Bonsi, 23rd May 1498; Marchese, p. 191).

[4] *Cf.* the expressions used of a simoniacally elected Pope in the Bull *Cum tam divino* to be presently quoted. On Savonarola's opinion concerning the "infidelity" of Alexander, Dr Grauert has written at some length in the *Wissenschaftliche Beilage zur Germania*, 30th June 1898, pp. 308 *sqq.*

simoniacal election to the Papacy should be regarded as *ipso facto* invalid, and incapable of revalidation by mere course of time or recognition.[1] There can be no question that this Bull had its origin in the sad memory of the scandalous election of Alexander. Unless we carefully distinguish between resistance to a lawful Pope, and resistance to one who is at least believed to be an intruder, it will be impossible to excuse the conduct of Julius II. himself when, as Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, he did his best to procure the deposition of Alexander VI. Lest, however, we should be misunderstood, we hasten to say that the case of Savonarola is not on the same footing with that of the Cardinal, as we shall presently point out in detail. It is true that the decree is not, formally, retrospective in its operation; it lays down the law "in posterum," and is silent about the past; and it may be urged that it is preposterous (in the etymological sense of the word), to cite in support of Savonarola a Bull which was issued seven years after his death.[2] It has, however, been recently urged by Dr Hermann Grauert, that the decree *Cum tam divino*, ought to be regarded rather in the light—practically, though not formally—of an authoritative ratification of a pre-existing law, or again, as establishing the correctness of an opinion already current, though not prevalent, among canonists and theologians as to the nullifying effects of a simoniacal election to the Papacy.[3] We do not feel by any means convinced that Dr Grauert is right, or that the opinion in question was well grounded. But it was actually held, as Dr Grauert has shown, by distinguished writers, whose good faith it would be absurd to call in question.[4]

[1] By this Bull it is decreed that if "quod Deus pro sua clementia . . . avertat," any one should hereafter be simoniacally elected Pope, "de simoniaca labe a quocumque Cardinali, qui eidem electioni interfuerit opponi et excipi potest, *sicut de vera et indubitata haeresi, ita quod a nullo pro Romano Pontifice habeatur* . . . et idem electus, non Apostolicus, sed apostaticus . . . habeatur." And the next paragraph sets forth that: "Nec hujusmodi simoniaca electio per subsequentem ipsius inthronizationem, *seu temporis cursum*, aut etiam omnium Cardinalium adorationem, seu obedientiam, *ullo unquam tempore convalescat*" (*Bullarium*, v. 263).

[2] "Man braucht mithin gar keine canonistischen Studien gemacht zu haben, um einzusehen, dass vor dem Erlass Julius II. ein canonisches Gesetz, welches eine simonistische Papstwahl für ungiltige erklärte, nicht in Kraft war. Die simonistische Wahl Alexanders VI. im Jahre 1492 war mithin zweifellos giltig" (Pastor, *Beurtheilung*, p. 15).

[3] Grauert, *loc. cit.*, pp. 306 *sqq.*

[4] The points of Dr Grauert's argument are briefly these: (1) Nicholas II., who in 1059 established the principle that the Pope henceforth should be elected by

Nor is there any reason that we can see why it might not be held in good faith by Savonarola.

Of this possibility, however, the papal commissaries could not be expected to take account. The currency of such opinions, and of others more directly in conflict with the teaching of the Bull *Execrabilis*, only made the action of Savonarola more dangerous. Moreover, even if it were tenable as an opinion that Alexander was not *per se* a lawful Pope, he was certainly entitled to be treated as such by the faithful at large, and by private individuals, so long as he was in actual and undisturbed possession of the Holy See; and so, in fact, Savonarola had treated him for several years. Nor could Savonarola, as a private individual, be objectively justified in raising the standard of revolt, however much an error of judgment might excuse him before God.[1] It was not for him, or for any other irresponsible person, to take the initiative in a movement which might have so seriously compromised the unity of Christendom. It is particularly noteworthy that even the Bull *Cum tam divino* by no means leaves it open to all and sundry to raise objections against the validity of a papal election. By the words "a quocumque Cardinali qui eidem electioni interfuerit opponi et excipi potest," the right of raising a protest is strictly limited to the Cardinals, and even among them it is restricted to those who have been present at the election. It is obvious, then, that even had the decree been in force in Savonarola's

the Cardinals, and by them alone, issued a further decree by which (according to Grauert) a simoniacal election was declared to be invalid. Father Emil Michael, S.J. (in *Zeitschr. f. kath Theol.*, 1896, p. 705) takes, however, a different view of the matter. (2) It is commonly supposed that the decree, *Licet de vitanda*, of Alexander III. (1179) declared even a simoniacal election to the Papacy to be valid, provided the choice were made by a two-thirds majority among the Cardinals. This interpretation of the decree Dr Grauert rejects. (3) In fact, he says, the opinions of mediæval theologians and canonists were divided. The prevalent opinion (viz. that such an election would be valid) was maintained by Augustus Triumphus, Turrecremata, and de Tudeschis (Panormitanus), and has quite recently been sustained by Dr Schnitzer (Schnitzer, pp. 477 *sqq.*). But Hostiensis (Henry of Susa, Cardinal Bishop of Ostia) and Johannes Andreæ oppose it. Grauert writes: "Für mich unterliegt es nicht die mindesten Zweifel das diese Ausführungen der grossen Canonisten des 13 und 14 Jahrhunderts (*i.e.* Hostiensis and Andreae), den Sinn der Decretale *Licet de vitanda* und die dabei massgebende Absicht Alexanders III. richtig darstellen" (Grauert, pp. 307-8).

[1] "Profecto sicut nec Alexandrum excusaverim de nimia in vitia (*sic*) licentia . . . ; ita neque Hieronymum commendaverim, quod *cum privatus fuerit*, nimio studio vitia Principis emendandi et castigandi rapi se usque eo permiserit" (Mansi, p. 583).

lifetime, it would have afforded him no justification for his action. Once more, the only ground on which he can be excused is that of an error of judgment of a very serious kind.

In the eye of the law, then, and in the judgment of the papal commissaries, Savonarola's guilt, in respect of the main charge against him, was abundantly proved, and the commissaries passed sentence accordingly. Could they have done otherwise? Of course it is easy for a man living in our own days to flatter himself that he, wise with the superior wisdom of the nineteenth century, would have acted very differently; that he would, as a mere matter of course, have lifted up his voice against the wicked Pontiff, and would have told him to his face that if Savonarola had been guilty of contumacious disobedience, or even of a treasonable or schismatical plot, it was he who, by the shameless intrigues which had led to his election, and by the flagrant scandals of his life as Pope, had provoked the disobedience, and invited the treason; and that his duty now lay, not in the execution of justice, but in the exercise of mercy, and in the self-humiliation of the Christian penitent. But can we be quite sure that it even as much as crossed the mind of Torriano or of Romolino that this was the wiser and the better course to take? Can we be even quite sure that it would have been wiser and better for them thus to protest against the sentence which they were bidden by the Pope to pronounce? When Agnolo Niccolini pleaded for a sentence of perpetual imprisonment rather than of death, and when his colleagues urged that amid the rapid changes of government the life of such a prisoner would be a standing menace to the peace of the city, can we be quite sure that the arguments in favour of capital punishment did not outweigh the promptings of mercy in the judgment of those to whom the peace of the Church was of immeasurably greater moment than the peace of Florence? Personally innocent of any grave sin as we believe Savonarola to have been, we do not venture to condemn his judges without distinction. That some of them were not merely men of abandoned lives, but men who would stick at no crime for the gratification of their political hatred we readily admit. Such men may perchance have been found among the judges who condemned Bernardo del Nero to the gallows. But just as there were good men, and among them Savonarola himself, who, though they were not dead to all feelings of humanity nor ignorant of the claims of mercy, were, nevertheless, content that Bernardo should expiate

by torture and death his plot against the Florentine constitution, so there were, if we mistake not, good men who deemed that Fra Girolamo was justly condemned for his attempt to overturn the constitution of the Church, and believed that the principle *salus populi suprema lex* required that the sentence on him, and even on his companions, should be carried out.

What has been here said does not of course justify all the assertions made or all the expressions used in the letter given below, wherein the Pope is informed—professedly by Torriano and Romolino—of the results of the trial. With every allowance for credulity as regards alleged facts, for excitement as palliating the use of vituperative language, and for the usual turgidity of the curial style, this letter must be pronounced a lamentable document; and we can only venture to suggest that it may perhaps have been the work of Romolino and not of his colleague. In the form in which it has come down to us it bears no signature; and the whole manner of the letter is so unlike that of numerous others, undoubtedly written by Torriano, which have been published, that our surmise appears to us to be not altogether groundless. There is nothing in the document, beyond the use of verbs in the plural number ("scribimus," etc.), that could be urged as proving it to be a joint production, and not merely the account given by one of the commissaries of their joint proceedings. We give the substance of it for what it is worth, adding at the foot of the page a few comments of our own.

23rd May 1498; Torriano and Romolino to the Pope.[1]—After relating the honourable reception of the commissaries by the authorities and people of Florence the letter sets forth that: "We examined the three Friars, one after another, and learned that they had all of them fallen into errors than which none greater could be expressed. First of all, Fra Hieronymo avowed that for fourteen years he had never made a sincere confession of his sins, and, nevertheless (imo tanto magis),

[1] "Joach. Turrianus, Ordinis Prædicatorum Magister Generalis, et Franciscus Romolinus J.U.D. ad Alexandrum Papam Sextum de Fratre Hieron. Savonarola et complicibus suis." The letter is given in Meier, pp. 389 *sqq.*: "Nach einen Mst. in der Bibliothek des verst. Grafen Bontourlin zu Florenz." It is also found in a little booklet of four leaves printed in 1521 ("Romae in campo Floro," *sic*), itself probably a reprint from an earlier edition, containing a "Dialogue" concerning Savonarola, and also a letter from the Pope to Lionello Chieregato, Bishop of Concordia (2nd April 1498), commending him for having preached "adversus falsum et perniciosum dogma iniquitatis filii fratris Hieronymi" (Gherardi, p. 16, n. 37).

continued to celebrate Mass.[1] Moreover, he declared that he had taken measures that Fra Silvestro and many other Friars of the same Order should hear confessions, and report to him what they had heard, and that he afterwards, both publicly in the pulpit and in private conversation, inveighed against the sins thus made known to him.[2] These things he pretended to have learned by a divine revelation. Moreover, he has been guilty of crimes so enormous (tanta scelera et detestanda flagitia perpetravit) that it does not seem right to make them known at present (nondum dicenda videantur). He confessed, moreover, to have been the cause of sedition among the citizens, of scarcity of provisions, and thereby of deaths among the poor, and of the slaughter (caedes) of many citizens of rank.[3] He declared also that he had abused the Sacraments of the Church."[4]

The letter goes on to recite Savonarola's contempt of the excommunication, his communicating the faithful, and of his having persuaded many excommunicated persons, even at the hour of death, not to seek absolution from the sentence which they had incurred, assuring them that such penalties were invalid, and that whoever thought otherwise was himself guilty of horrible heresy.[5]

"He has confessed also that by letters and messages he has sought to incite many Christian princes to a schism against your Holiness. Moreover, to such a pitch of wickedness did this friar, or rather this

[1] The real basis of this assertion is, that, when asked whether he had declared certain matters, which he did not regard as sinful, in confession, Savonarola had answered "No." In allusion to which point "the Prophet" asks, in Fra Benedetto's dialogue: "Et dove si truova che l' huomo sia tenuto ad confessarsi del bene et delle cose che non sono peccato?" It must, however, be admitted that Fra Girolamo had given some occasion for a misunderstanding of his own words, for, being further interrogated how it was that he had not confessed these things, he replied: "When a man has lost the faith he does not care what he does (non si cura come l'anima sua vada)"; words which, according to Benedetto, are to be understood as a perfectly general statement, intended for the special benefit of Ser Ceccone, but naturally interpreted as a damning admission. (*See* Benedetto in Villari, *loc. cit.*, p. cxliii).

[2] For this statement there seems to be no excuse whatever; for Fra Girolamo had, even according to the garbled process, stoutly denied the charge which he is here alleged to have admitted.

[3] The only foundation for this seems to be Savonarola's admission that he had not raised any protest against the execution of Bernardo del Nero and his companions.

[4] This charge may have reference to Savonarola's action on more than one occasion in making the consecrated Host an instrument, as it were, by which to confirm the truth of his prophetic utterances. *See* above, pp. 283 *sqq*.

[5] *See* above, p. 280.

nefarious monster (omnipedum nequissimum), proceed, that all his appearance of goodness was but a pretence and a cloak for ambition, and for his desire to attain to worldly glory. He has been wont to turn to the crucifix and say to our Lord: 'If I lie, Thou liest.' In a word, such is the enormity of his crimes that the hand shrinks from writing them, and the mind from thinking of them.

"As for Fra Domenico, he had frequently dared to say in the pulpit that the angels would fall from heaven sooner than that anything predicted by Fra Hieronymo should not come to pass (prius . . . casuros, quam quicquam . . . non adimpletum iri). And he used to call on God, and express the wish that if he lied he might be hung with a halter and his body be reduced to ashes, and cast to the winds and waves. We pass over the errors of which this friar might have been the occasion when he wished to enter the fire carrying the Body of Christ."

The writers then go on to relate how, after a very few questions, the friars having ratified, "authentice et sponte," what they had previously confessed, they were degraded, handed over to the secular arm, and put to execution.

For this letter, or rather for considerable portions of it, we can offer no excuse. It is not merely that no allowance is made for the possibility of delusion, and that language of unmeasured harshness is employed throughout, but Fra Hieronymo is represented as having admitted what he certainly denied, viz. that he had habitually made use of knowledge gained through the confessional, and that he had, of set purpose, laid himself out to gain such knowledge. For such a wilful perversion of the truth no palliation appears to be possible.

Nevertheless, although the letter embodies at least one grave calumny, it also contains much that is true. And the truth was sufficient, on Savonarola's own principles, to justify the sentence passed upon him. As for his two companions, we can only regret that the notion of complicity in the minds of the commissaries appears to have been so vague that it was taken to cover the case, not merely of Salvestro, but also of that manifestly well-meaning though misguided man, Domenico da Pescia.

After the fullest consideration of the whole circumstances of the case we are unwilling, on the mere ground of the sentence—apart from the letter wherein it is recorded—to condemn Savonarola's judges. Every one will now concur in the wish that mercy could have been shown. But the exercise of the prerogative of mercy lay, not with the judges, but with their master, Alexander VI. Luke Wadding, the author of the *Annales Minorum*, speaks of

Savonarola as a man "dignus profecto, uti ego . . . non temere conjicio, qui honorificentiori fine religiosae conversationis cursum terminaret"; and again as "solo fortassis vehementis zeli nimio ardore ultra metas evectus." Yet this same writer, in the very same section of his Annals, quotes with approval the high encomium passed upon Savonarola's judge Torriano in the chronicles of his own Order.[1] Our own deliberate opinion is, that while Savonarola ought to be acquitted on the charge of having sinned grievously, it is also right to refrain from charging his judges with the guilt of judicial murder, or even (considering the circumstances of the time), from that of excessive cruelty; always bearing in mind that they acted under command of the Pope. As for the Pope himself, we are willing to believe that, had Fra Girolamo and his companions been sent to Rome, the sentence of death might not improbably have been commuted for one of imprisonment. But the Florentines having refused to send them thither —and this, as it would seem, in accordance with Savonarola's own desire—we cannot be surprised that Alexander should have directed that the law should take its course, even as, with Savonarola's tacit approval, the law had taken its course in the case of Bernardo del Nero.[2]

Our readers will, we trust, be thankful if we pass rapidly over the closing scene. Shattered by the repeated tortures which he had undergone, his soul was yet strong in His strength who is the support of the downcast; and he had spent the weary days which elapsed between his second and his third examination (25th April to 20th May), days of solitary and rigorous confinement, in well-nigh uninterrupted prayer. His very beautiful meditations on the Psalms, "Miserere" (Ps. li.), and "In te Domine speravi" (Ps. xxx.), composed during his imprisonment, and the "Rule of a Christian Life" which he drew up for the use of his gaoler, are a touching

[1] "Joachimus Turrianus *quem dulcissimum et humanissimum fuisse, in benignitate et caritate Ordinem gubernasse, nulli molestum nisi malis, bonis omnibus bonum, et cum magna Ordinis mœstitia, qui Patrem Fratrum se amisisse dolebat decessisse* citata ejurdem Ordinis [*i.e.* Prædicatorum] chronica recensent" (*Annales Minorum*, vol. xv. s.a. 1498, n. 22, p. 163. The italics are Wadding's, but serve only to indicate a quotation embodied in the text.)

[2] Mansi (*loc. cit.*) suggests that Alexander "*causationem aliquam prætendere potuit* extremum supplicium in Savonarolam decernendi." Our own view is, on this particular point, more favourable to the Pope.

record of his thoughts and aspirations during that time of tribulation. His last sleep, during the night which preceded his execution, was taken with his head resting on the knees of one of the members of the pious confraternity of the Battuti, whose office it was to assist the dying. After a brief interval of this peaceful repose he once more rose to pray, and at daybreak he received at his own hands the Holy Communion, and communicated his two companions. Having been kept apart since the night of their arrest, six weeks before, they had been allowed an interview on the previous evening, and now they met again for the last consolations of religion.

Admonished that the time for the execution had arrived, the three came forth to die. From the Palazzo Vecchio, a long narrow platform extended across the Piazza towards the Tetto de' Pisani. It terminated in a circular scaffold heaped high with the fuel that was to consume the dead bodies of the condemned men. Above the pile of wood rose the gibbet with its three halters.

"On the marble terrace of the Palazzo were three tribunals; one near the door for the Bishop (Pagagnotti), who was to perform the ceremony of degradation on Fra Girolamo and his two brethren . . . another for the Papal Commissaries, who were to pronounce them heretics and schismatics, and deliver them over to the secular arm; and a third, close to Marzocco, at the corner of the terrace where the platform began, for the Gonfaloniere, and the Eight, who were to pronounce the sentence of death."[1]

Before each of these tribunals, in turn, the three companions were led to hear their sentence pronounced, and, strange as it may seem, to receive at the hands of the Papal delegates a plenary indulgence, as if in recognition of at least the possibility that they had acted in good faith. Then, stripped of their religious habit, they were conducted to the scaffold, and Savonarola once more stood face to face with the people of his beloved Florence. In the words of the authoress of *Romola*, he saw "torches waving to kindle the fuel beneath his dead body," and "faces glaring with a yet worse light"; he heard, as His divine Master had heard, "gross jests, taunts, and curses"; he was well assured that in the background were many hundreds of weeping Piagnoni, faithful still; and he knew that the very moment of his cruel and ignominious death would be for him the moment of a great moral victory.

[1] *Romola*, chap. lxxiii.

And so in a very true sense it was. Fra Girolamo Savonarola had sounded the long-drawn and wailing blast of a fearless challenge to all the powers of wickedness. He had slipped and fallen in the shock of the first onset. But the notes of his trumpet-call reverberated through Christendom, and through the century that was so soon to dawn upon the world, and woke many an echo which heartened other men and women besides S. Philip Neri and S. Catherine of Ricci for their own combat with evil. The Church was scourged after another manner than that which he had foreseen. The face of the Church has been renewed, though not so "soon and speedily" as he had imagined. In substance, however, more than one of Fra Girolamo's "conclusions" have been made good, even though his revelations have been for the most part disallowed. And, all his errors and their consequences notwithstanding, the Church and the world owe him a debt of gratitude.

It was Kitchener, not Gordon, who conquered the Soudan. Yet, had it not been for Gordon's tragic death, there had been no Soudan expedition under Kitchener. And it may be that the leaders of the great Catholic revival of the sixteenth century were more indebted than they were aware to Fra Girolamo Savonarola. The reform of the Church was to be effected by methods other than his. Not "cito et velociter"; not by that brilliant kind of warfare which wins a battle and loses a campaign; but slowly and surely, through patience and long preparation, and a careful adaptation of means to ends, by the assiduous training of a body of men who, in their turn, were to drill others one by one in the principles of the spiritual life, and little by little to leaven the world. And again, not by the decentralisation of the Church, and the reduction of its rounded circle to an ellipse with rival foci at Rome and Florence, but by the uncompromising assertion of the duty of loyalty to the Vicar of Christ in his official capacity, whatever might be his personal shortcomings or even vices; by the full and explicit recognition of the truth that, "de Sion exibit lex et verbum Domini de Jerusalem." And yet, who shall say how far the "excursions and alarums" of the great Florentine preacher not merely preluded and heralded, but helped to clear the ground for, the organised religious campaign of the sixteenth century?

. . . .

"When Savonarola, degraded and unfrocked, ended his life on the gallows, his cause seemed to be irretrievably lost, and his enemies triumphed. Nevertheless, he died a conqueror, and he died for the noblest cause for which a man can give his life—for the spread of God's kingdom on earth. The future belonged to him, and he to the Church."[1]

So writes Dr Schnitzer, and we may make his words our own without either justifying the disobedience of Fra Girolamo, or unreservedly condemning his judges. Even though his disobedience may have had its root in pride, and may have made his condemnation inevitable, no one can call in question the burning zeal for the kingdom of God which was the dominant motive in his life; and the fire which consumed his mortal remains may be deemed to have purged his fault, at least before the tribunal of human judgment.

We have said: "All his errors notwithstanding"; for those writers have, in our judgment, done a real disservice to Fra Girolamo's memory who have striven to show that the life and character of their hero were all but flawless, and to justify well-nigh his every word and action. To do this is to miss the lessons which are writ large on the very surface of his career, and to call aloud for the cold and calculating application of a discriminating criticism where the verdict of common-sense might well have sufficed. The lessons to be learned from the life and death of Fra Girolamo Savonarola are, in our judgment, so obvious that, but for the unmeasured encomium of his panegyrists, it had been needless to draw the obvious moral.

The severe austerity of Fra Girolamo's life, his truly wonderful gift of prayer, his fearless intrepidity, his boundless confidence in God, his keen insight into the true condition of the Church and of civil society, his surpassing eloquence, his marvellous influence over the minds and hearts of men, an influence wielded on the whole for the noblest of ends—all these things claim the admiration which is due to a truly great and good man. Yet the story of his life reminds us that even exalted gifts and noble qualities such as these may yet be unavailing to save a man from being misled by a subtle temptation into an unacknowledged self-esteem, which may end by sapping the very roots of obedience, by luring him onwards till at last he makes private judgment—in matters of conduct if not of doctrine—the court of final appeal. And when this point has been reached, only two issues are possible if the conflict becomes acute; spiritual ruin or temporal disaster. It was, perhaps, well for Fra Girolamo

[1] Schnitzer, p. 801.

that temporal disaster overtook him, and that his baptism of fire came to him in time.

We had intended to say something on the subject of Savonarola nd the Saints; but a very few words on this head must suffice. It is well known with what veneration he was regarded by St Philip Neri and St Catharine de' Ricci. It is perhaps not so well known that St Ignatius of Loyola would not allow any of his writings to be kept or read in the houses of the Society of Jesus. Yet St Ignatius of Loyola was the intimate friend of St Philip Neri, and it would be the very extreme of impertinence to pretend to balance the merits of these two great servants of God. The only thing to be said on the subject would seem to be that St Philip and St Catharine venerated Savonarola for his eminent virtues, while St Ignatius feared lest the example of his resistance to the Pope might have evil consequences in days when it was of supreme importance to emphasise the duty of obedience to lawful authority. So far as we are aware, neither St Philip nor St Catherine have discussed, in any writings which now survive, the question of Savonarola's conflict with Alexander VI. And an open question it remains. We have expressed our opinion: *Valeat quantum.*

But one emphatic protest we must raise in conclusion. In the very latest work on Savonarola which has yet appeared, we find the following words: "Benedict XIV. deemed him (Savonarola) worthy of canonisation, and allowed his name to appear in a catalogue, published during his pontificate, containing a list of blessed servants of God, and of other venerable persons illustrious by their sanctity." Now, it was pointed out nearly twenty years ago by Father Grisar, S.J., whose remarks on the subject have been reproduced by Dr Pastor, that the "catalogue" in question is for practical purposes simply an index of the names of persons spoken of in Benedict's work *De Servorum Dei Beatification et Canonizatione.*[1] The function of an index is generally understood to be that of referring the reader or student to some passage in the body of the book. Turning up the passage referred to in this particular case, we read that, on occasion of the process of canonisation, or beatification, of St Catharine de' Ricci, Lambertini himself (afterwards Benedict XIV.), who was then acting as "Promotor Fidei," raised the objection that Catharine had prayed to Fra Hieronymo Savonarola; that, on the

[1] Grisar, in *Zeitschr. für Katholische Theologie*, iv. 392 (1880); Pastor, *Zur Beurtheilung Savonarolas*, p. 17.

other hand, the postulators of the cause urged many reasons against the objection; and that, in particular, "certain persons, carried away by the heat of argument . . . began to touch, incidentally, on the alleged unjust execution of Savonarola and his companions"; but that in the opinion of the writer (Benedict XIV.) "this argument of theirs . . . was not only *devoid of solid foundation*, but also little or nothing to the point."[1] Whether a writer, who regarded the opinion that Savonarola was unjustly condemned as "devoid of solid foundation" can be rightly said to have "deemed him worthy of canonisation," is a question that may be left to the judgment of the reader. It is, of course, too much to hope that the "catalogue" of Benedict XIV. will never again be brought up as evidence by the apologists of Fra Girolamo. The blunder has survived the exposure of Grisar and of Pastor, and we may take it for granted that it will continue to make its appearance from time to time.

But it is greatly to be lamented that the memory of a great and good man should be so dealt with as to necessitate such protests as we (following Grisar and Pastor) have felt it our duty to make. *Amicus Cato: magis amica veritas.* It is by the faithful observance of the principle underlying these words, and not by indiscriminate laudation, that his due meed of honour will be most surely paid to the memory of Fra Girolamo Savonarola.

[1] The sentence, which fills nearly a whole column of a folio page, is too long to quote, even in a footnote. But we give, unabridged, the portion of the passage which bears on the matter in hand. "Major suffragantium numerus, quin immo fere uniformis, vim responsionis agnoscebat et confitebatur; sed, cum aestu disputationis nonnulli abrepti non modo virtutum in vita, et in obitu, *sed etiam mortis absque legitima causa Savonarolæ et sociis allatae*, licet per transennam, verba facere cœpissent, *quod tamen mortis absque sufficienti et legitima causa argumentum non solum erat vero fundamento destitutum*, sed etiam aut nihil aut parum prodesse poterat pro vindicando facto Servæ Dei . . . re delata ad S.M. Benedictum PP. XIII., placuit Sanctitati suæ . . . ne de justitia vel injustitia condemnationis Savonarolæ quaestio . . . revivisceret, decretum edere," etc. (*De Beatif.*, lib. iii. c. xxv. n. 20). The purport of the decree was that, passing over the subject of the veneration shown by Catharine to Savonarola, the cause of her beatification should be proceeded with.

THE END.

INDEX

NOTE.—*Primary references are to surnames where these are known. But mere local designations of origin (not of lordship), such as "da Firenze," "da Milano," are not treated as true surnames. In default of the surname the reference is given under the Christian name. As regards the spelling of proper names, considerable variety is found in the various documents, the orthography of which has been followed in the summaries, etc., occurring in the course of the work. But it has not seemed necessary to reproduce more than a very few of these variants in the Index.*

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